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HOLDING ON: GENDER RELATIONS, FOOD  
SECURITY AND WOMEN'S OPTIONS AND  
STRATEGIES FOR MAINTAINING ACCESS TO  
LAND IN THE ACHOLI REGION OF UGANDA

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Ph.D

2015

Holding on: gender relations, food security and  
women's options and strategies for maintaining  
access to land in the Acholi region of Uganda

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Submitted for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Social Sciences  
University of Bradford

2015

## **Abstract**

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**Holding on: gender relations, food security and women's options and strategies for maintaining access to land in the Acholi region of Uganda**

**Key Words: gender relations, patriarchy, bargaining, marriage, land, food security, Uganda, Acholi**

This research is based on fieldwork that was carried out in the post-conflict villages of Adunu and Kom in the Acholi region of northern Uganda. It argues that a woman's maintained access to customary land within these villages is determined not only by her sex and by provisions within Acholi customary law, but also by her marital and parental status as framed by patriarchal ideologies and power relations. It shows that if women wish to retain and hold on to land that is socially (and sometimes, legally) meant to be 'theirs', they must be prepared constantly to bargain and negotiate with either their husband, their husband's lineage or their own natal clan. They must also conform to gendered norms concerning female behaviour, especially those that pertain to their sexuality and reproductive abilities. It is by adopting such strategies and, often, by making concessions, that they will be able to, in most cases, maintain access to land, particularly if land is in abundance.

The thesis also shows that women's food security is contingent on the gendered relations that they have and maintain with male family members and also on factors that are external, be these climate change or their ability to farm effectively. By looking at the relevance of gender relations in land access and food security, through a gender awareness lens and a feminist ethnography, this thesis provides a nuanced understanding of how women maintain access to customary land and how they can achieve food security, albeit within a male dominated system.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank all of the people who were involved in this research whilst I was in Uganda. I am eternally indebted to you, not only for the time that you shared with me, but for accepting me into your community. It is you, who made this PhD possible.

Thanks to my supervisors, Fiona Macaulay and Susie Jacobs, for all of your support and advice, and for your patience, and for bringing out the feminist in me. It has been a pleasure working with you and I hope I have done you proud.

Kat Ludwin, you are an absolute star and my PhD rock, I am honoured to call you my mate. Nicky Duell, you've always managed to make me smile, even when I've felt like crying, cheers bird. Anna Mdee, thank you so much for encouraging me to do a PhD and for all of the guidance that you have given me over the years that we have known each other; you're one in a million and a true friend. I'd also like to thank my wonderful friends, Jen, Isabel, Sian, Angie, Ruth and Missie; you are all strong women, and women who have helped me immensely. Thanks are also due to Moses Okech and Michele Mozley.

To my dad George Thorley, thank you so much for your support and encouragement. You have seen me through the dark times and rejoiced with me in the good times. Not only are you an amazing dad, you are an awesome granddad and I love you for this. I'd also like to thank my Mam, my brothers Mike and Cameron and my sister Alana. And of course my Acholi family. Thanks Mike for the endless chats that we shared whilst in the field and in the evening over a beer. Ajalo, thank you for taking such good care of Amelie and thanks to Ben, George and Alice Otto.

Graham Thomas, thanks for listening to me; you are wonderful at your job. It is an amazing service that the Terrance Higgins Trust provides.

Dr Emma Street, Anne and the rest of your team, you guys are awesome.

And to Job, the gatekeeper into this research. I thank you.

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my children, Beya India and Amelie Akello. Beya, your support has been invaluable. You are truly an inspiration and I am so proud that you are my daughter. Amelie, we began this journey together and we have ended it together. You are a wonderful daughter and a brilliant research sidekick. Most importantly, you are the gift that gave me life.

I love you both with all of my being.

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## **Glossary and Abbreviations**

<b>ARiD</b>	<b>Advocates for research and development</b>
<b>CCPR</b>	<b>International Convention on Civil and Political Rights</b>
<b>CEDAW</b>	<b>The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women</b>
<b>CFSVA</b>	<b>Comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis</b>
<b>CLT</b>	<b>Customary land tenure</b>
<b>CLTS</b>	<b>Customary land tenure system</b>
<b>CSO</b>	<b>Civil society organisation</b>
<b>FAO</b>	<b>Food and Agricultural Agency</b>
<b>FHH</b>	<b>Female headed household</b>
<b>FIDA</b>	<b>Ugandan Association of Women Lawyers</b>
<b>GEI</b>	<b>Gender empowerment index</b>
<b>GHI</b>	<b>Global Hunger Index</b>
<b>GPS</b>	<b>Gender product survey</b>
<b>IDP</b>	<b>Internally displaced person</b>
<b>IFRRI</b>	<b>International Food Policy Research Institute</b>
<b>IMF</b>	<b>International Monetary Fund</b>
<b>IPC</b>	<b>Integrated food security phase classification</b>
<b>LC</b>	<b>Local council</b>
<b>LEMU</b>	<b>Land and Equity movement of Uganda</b>
<b>LRA</b>	<b>Lord's Resistance Army</b>
<b>LTS</b>	<b>Land tenure system</b>
<b>MHH</b>	<b>Male headed household</b>
<b>MP</b>	<b>Member of Parliament</b>
<b>MOAAIAF</b>	<b>Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non Governmental Organisation</b>
<b>NLP</b>	<b>National land policy</b>
<b>NRA</b>	<b>National Resistance Army</b>

<b>NRM</b>	<b>National Resistance Movement</b>
<b>PLA</b>	<b>Participatory learning and action techniques</b>
<b>PPCT</b>	<b>Principles and Practices of Customary Tenure</b>
<b>SSA</b>	<b>Sub- Saharan Africa</b>
<b>ULA</b>	<b>Ugandan Land Alliance</b>
<b>UoB</b>	<b>University of Bradford</b>
<b>UBOS</b>	<b>Uganda Bureau of Statistics</b>
<b>UNICEF</b>	<b>United Nations children's fund</b>
<b>UNIFEM</b>	<b>United Nations Development Fund for Women</b>
<b>UNLA</b>	<b>Uganda National Liberation Front</b>
<b>WFP</b>	<b>World food programme</b>
<b>WFO</b>	<b>World Food Organisation</b>
 <b>Dowry</b>	 In the local context, the word dowry is used to describe the payment of what is known as bridewealth.
 <b>Marriage</b>	 Marriage in the context of this thesis refers to a marriage where bridewealth has been paid.
 <b>Rwot</b>	 Chief

## Chapter One- Introduction

### 1.0 Introduction:

**Holding on: gender relations, food security and women's options and strategies for maintaining access to land in the Acholi region of Uganda.**

This thesis focuses on women's lives in the post-conflict villages of Adunu and Kom in the Acholi region of northern Uganda. It examines how they access land held under customary tenure, and how they maintain access. It also discusses how gender relations that are primarily centred on patriarchal ideologies and power relations, influence the strategies and options that women will employ so that they can maintain access to land; that many women know or feel that they have a social right (and in some instances legal right) to. This thesis, secondarily, explores how gender relations may influence a woman's food security. It does this by answering the following question,

*How do gender relations influence land access for women and household food security in the post-conflict villages of Adunu and Kom in northern Uganda?*

The following thematic sub-questions are also of relevance:

- ∂ How are gender relations manifested and supported?
- ∂ How do individuals access land in the local context and what influences this?
- ∂ What do women have to do so that they can continue to access land?
- ∂ What is food security and how does someone become food secure?
- ∂ What influences individual and household food security?
- ∂ Are women more prone to food insecurity than men?

The justification for this research, is that there is a body of literature, emerging predominantly from the Global North through Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), academic work and Financial Institutions, that examines the position of women in relation to how they access, control and own land within patriarchal societies in Sub Saharan Africa (SSA). The



resounding conclusion from these works is that women in agrarian communities within SSA are disadvantaged, not only in how they access land, but also with regard to independent ownership. This is especially the case if the land tenure systems practice patrilineal inheritance and support patriarchal ideologies of power, with the support of customary law (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2006; Manji, 2006; Place, 2009; World Bank, 2013). Not only are women believed to be disadvantaged in terms of land access, control and ownership, but, in SSA they are often seen as suffering food insecurity, be this within a household or individually (Holt-Gimenez & Patel, 2009).

By looking at the relevance of gender relations in land access and food security this thesis aims to contribute knowledge to international development thinking, specifically to debates that pertain to: land access, patriarchal ideologies of power, gender theory, food security and how people perceive food security and also Acholi women. It contributes to these debates by using a feminist gender lens and was conducted by using a feminist ethnography and used a mixed methods approach, in which the following methods were employed: semi structured interviews, observations and focus groups. This brief introductory chapter provides an introduction to the themes of the thesis and gives a chapter outline.

Chapter Two of this thesis is concerned with introducing key theories and concepts that are concerned with gender, the gender order, gender relations and patriarchy. It is here that I draw on the works of the Western feminist scholars Sylvia Walby and Raewyn Connell and argue that gender is a social construction, as proposed by Johnson (2005); Jackson and Scott (2002); Connell (2009). A woman's position to bargain and negotiate, and their ability to assert their agency is also addressed within this chapter. For this to be done I have referred to the works of Kabeer (1994 & 1999); Sen (1990); Agarwal (1997) and, most specifically, the work of Deniz Kandiyoti (1988 & 1999).

As this research is concerned with gender relations as they are manifested and maintained within the home, I have given emphasis to the institution of the family, as it is at the family level where decisions are made that pertain not

only to the role and thus the position of women within the family unit as a whole, but also to the ways in which decisions are made that determine a woman's access to land. As the institution of marriage is of paramount importance in SSA, I discuss the relevance of marriage and how the payment of bridewealth is often used to continue the subordination of women within patriarchal societies. However, it is the payment of bridewealth that also gives women some power within a marriage and, most importantly, facilitates them being able to inherit land.

It is here where I also give emphasis to lands held under customary land tenure and demonstrate that, contrary to popular belief, as expressed in academic and policy literature, that women are socially entitled to access land and also to control land in SSA. And, that it is not only men who have a right to live on or derive a living from traditional lands (of which there are numerous variations), but women are also expected to make use of the resource.

The thesis is also concerned with gender relations that may influence a woman's food security. Chapter Two also addresses why food security is of concern in SSA and how women are affected by food security. The generally accepted definition of food security is discussed and its validity challenged.

Chapter Three discusses the methodology and the methods that were employed in this research. Given that the work was influenced by feminist theories of equality and the purpose of the research was to co-construct knowledge and investigate gender relations, a feminist ethnographic methodology was employed. The methods that were used are those that complement ethnographic studies, namely semi structured interviews, observations and focus groups.

The research location and why I specifically chose to conduct my research in the villages of Adunu and Kom is also explored within Chapter Three. I discuss my research journey and how my being married to a local from the village of Kom and having a toddler in the field with me whilst conducting my research influenced the research process and also affected what I was able to do with the time that was available to me.

During my time in the field I elected to work with a male research assistant. In doing so I was given a different awareness of gender inequalities and a useful insight into the patriarchal ideologies of the Acholi people. The dynamics of this relationship are also discussed in this chapter.

The chapter also addresses reflexivity as informed by a feminist methodological approach, and it is here that I consider my own subjectivity as a member of the community through marriage. Finally, the chapter discusses how I analysed the data that was generated whilst I was in the field. Specific emphasis is given to the analysis of narrative material as it is here that rich data emerged.

Chapter Four, sets out the background of the case study and is specifically concerned with the Acholi of Uganda and a woman's position within Ugandan and Acholi society as a whole. It is a chapter that demonstrates that the Acholi are an ethnic group who have experienced numerous hardships and where social foundations have been in some instances eroded, though the foundations that support the continuation and the subordination of women are still evident and accepted by both men and women as being the cultural norm.

A historical overview of the evolution of land tenure systems (LTS) is presented and the impact that these LTS have had on women. As customary land tenure (CLT) is the predominate LTS in Ugandan, emphasis has been given to CLT.

Specifically, this chapter discusses the patriarchal nature of the Ugandan state and demonstrates that, despite the state professing to promote equality across gender, owing to deeply rooted patriarchal ideologies, the state is actually complicit in the subordination of women.

I also present the empirical data that pertains to women and land access in Uganda. Owing to the two decade war that ravaged the Acholi region, research on land access is limited and when conducted has tended to be quantitative rather than qualitative. It is this research that is limited to people's perceptions of land access and ownership. There is no reference made to what people,

most specifically women, are expected to do if they wish to continue to have access or if they deem ownership to be the case, to have ownership. Food security in Uganda (and specifically the Acholi region) is also discussed as too is the role of Acholi women in Acholi society. Specific reference is given to marriage, children and Acholi women within the home.

The next three chapters are arranged in relation to a woman's marital status. Chapter Five is specifically concerned with how married women access land, but most importantly it discusses what married women are expected to do so that they can remain married and retain access and control to the ancestral lands of their husbands. It demonstrates that married women are in a constant process of bargaining with their husbands (Kandiyoti, 1988) and that it is through bargaining that they make choices and also assert their agency. This chapter illustrates that married women are more than aware that they are meant to have secure access to the lands of their husbands, more so if bridewealth has been paid for them. It is the payment of bridewealth that gives women some sense of security and ultimately some power. In this chapter I demonstrate that married women are by no means a homogenous group and that several categories of married women, most specifically polygamous and *de jure*, are similar in status to women who are classified as single, though they are under the control of their husbands and not the generational patriarch.

In relation to food security within a household where there is a married couple, I discuss that there is no difference in how food is allocated within the household between women and men. If anything, contrary to the view of academic and policy literature, women are more likely to have access to more food than their spouses. It is also here where I demonstrate that, even if married women do have secure access to land, unless there is a conducive environment supporting crop production (for example a favourable climate, access to key resources, of which oxen is one), then the harvest that they will produce will be affected. The chapter also illustrates that, even in a patriarchal society, married women are theoretically supposed to have full power and control over all crops that are produced for household food consumption.

Chapter Six looks specifically at how social relations influence a widow's continued access to the lands of their late husband and considers the factors influencing this. It demonstrates that some widows are vulnerable. This is even if widows are socially to be afforded respect. The chapter illustrates how traditional practices that are supposed to support widows actually appear to be eroding. It also shows how important it is for widows to have living children. If widows do wish to continue to reside on the ancestral lands of their husband they must be prepared to bargain, to fight, to accept a lower status within society or make concessions related to their sexual freedom. A widow's food security, as with a married woman's food security, is influenced by their ability to access resources and also by climatic conditions. However, unlike married women, their food security is directly related to the relationship that they have with the patriarch of their late husband's family as it is he who controls the continuation of land access and retention. The chapter also shows the ways in which Ugandan state legislation and policy intrinsically support the subordination and inequality of women.

Chapter Seven argues that all women, regardless of their marital status, are socially and traditionally entitled to access and have control over an area of land, though in this instance, unlike married women and widows, the land that single women are entitled to access is land that is managed and overseen by either the generational patriarch of their natal family, or by their brother. This chapter demonstrates that if land is not in demand, then single women who return home when there has been a breakdown in a relationship will be given land, though if land is in short supply then, owing to their position within the gender hierarchy, they may be given nothing. Single women, like widows, need to be prepared to make certain compromises and concessions if they wish to remain on the lands that are controlled by the generational patriarch, and, as with widows, some of these are related to a woman's ability to bargain and also to choose her sexual partner and control her reproductive ability. The ability to embrace a more masculine role within the community is also seen as being important.

A single woman's food security when they return home is completely contingent on the relationships that she will have, not only with the male

members of her family, but also with the female members. A single woman's ability to be food secure is also related to the number of children that she has, whether she has access to resources that are known to increase yields and also to her ability to be able to work her land.

All of the categories of women must remember their position in the gender hierarchy and also conform to their socially constructed gender roles.

Chapter eight draws the thesis to a close. The relevance of my findings is discussed and I outline how they can and do contribute to international development thinking. I also discuss the limitations to the research and what I would have done differently. It is within this chapter that I propose further areas that warrant feminist influenced research and discuss how my work can be of use in the policy arena and demonstrate that if women in villages such as Adunu and Kom are to gain more agency and power, the international community needs to accept that in areas of SSA where traditional land practices prevail they need to work with the traditional patriarchal authorities and not against them.

### **Gender relations, women, land and food security a conceptual overview.**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents three main areas of theory that are drawn from predominantly Western feminist academics, these being theories that pertain to gender relations, patriarchy and the various elements that are concerned with bargaining and agency. It also discusses women in the institution of the family and their position within the household. Specific reference is given to the importance of marriage, sexuality and reproduction. Finally it discusses the dominant land tenure system that is evident in Sub Saharan Africa and conceptualises what food security is and how women may be affected.

#### **2.2 Conceptualising Gender**

There have been and continue to be debates about what we actually mean by the term gender. There are those who believe that gender is biologically determined or essentialist and those who believe that gender, like sex, is a social construction.<sup>1</sup>

With regards to the essentialist argument and those who support biological determinism, gender is perceived as being innate and as being biological and static. How we as human, (males and females) behave are “expressions of an underlying natural essence” (Andrews, 1997:476). It is these natural biological differences, that, as March and Keating (2006) observe, contribute to how social relations are organised. It is also these differences that predefine masculinities and femininities.

There is also a great deal of literature and theory that refutes the essentialist argument. One major critique of the essentialism approach to gender identity is that it negates social influences and our everyday interaction within our social relations (Oakley, 1985). This is supported by Lindsey (2011); Connell (2009); Johnson (2005); Kimmel (2004); Jackson and Scott (2002), who propose that gender is a social construction and that it is a learned set of

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed discussion on the social construction of sex see Wharton (2011); Connell; (1995) and Oakley (1972).

behaviours; behaviours that occur through and are sustained by our social interactions. In effect we learn to be either feminine or masculine, though the meaning of femininity and masculinity varies between and within different societies (Jackson & Scott, 2002). Therefore what we learn and how we learn it influences not only our behaviour, or how we manipulate our behaviour so that we can conform to our masculinities and or femininities, but also our beliefs about these. It is through the process of learning appropriate behaviours that we formulate our gender identities. It is one's society and or culture that delineate this. It is a process that, as March and Keating (2006) note, begins at birth. Also, as Bem (1993) proposes, essentialism negates the contribution of history and culture to how one understands and perceives gender.

As this thesis is influenced by feminism and is grounded in the social sciences, I believe that gender identity is socially constructed, as Connell observes,

" Gender...is not an expression of biology, or a fixed dichotomy in human life or character. It is a pattern in our social arrangements, and in the everyday activities or practices which those practices govern.... Gender is, above all, a matter of the social relations within which individuals and groups act" (10: 2009).

In effect there has been a shift from looking at gender simply as being a determinant of our sexual biology to seeing gender as being constructed through interaction and discourse (Majstorvic & Lassen, 2011). As Connell (2009) notes, gender identity is continuously changing owing to its intractability to the social world.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore our gender roles are characterisations and behaviours that different cultures and societies attribute to the sex of a person. Though, as the African feminist Oyèrónkẹ Oyěwùmí (2002) would argue, even this is limited as when discussing gender, Western scholars still depart from

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<sup>2</sup> Jackson and Scott (2002:2), "Gender cannot be abstracted from the wider social relations with which it is enmeshed, that gender intersects other social divisions and inequalities, such as class, 'race' and sexuality, and that the meanings of masculinity and femininity vary within, as well as between, societies".



the fixed “binarily opposed male/female.. in which the male is superior”.<sup>3</sup> That said, as noted by Jackson and Scott (2002:1-2), “gender... denotes hierarchical division between women and men.” For example in Saudi Arabia women are not permitted to drive, whereas men are. In Vietnam, men are socially accepted to be smokers whereas women are not. In Anglophone countries in the Global North, if women have sex on a first date with men they are often referred to as being ‘easy’ and seen as being unmarriageable. Women across the world are also expected to conform to certain codes of dress; baring ones breast in public is most countries in the Global North is illegal, whereas men can walk around with their chests bare in public if they wish. This is also the case in other areas of the world, including Uganda. Therefore, women conform to their socially denoted femininities.

Not only has Connell given a concise and comprehensive definition as to what gender is, but she also proposes what is often referred to as being one of the most complete theoretical accounts of gender (Giddens & Sutton, 2013:639). It is this that I will now discuss.

### **2.3 Gender Orders**

Fundamentally Connell’s work is concerned with how social powers that are almost exclusively held by men due to the societies that we live in being patriarchal, create and sustain inequality. She does this by analysing what she refers to as a society’s “Gender order”, this being the patterns of power relations that are evident between femininities and masculinities that occur in our everyday interactions within society, these being: labour, power and cathexis.

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<sup>3</sup> Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí (2002) also propose that concepts of gender are alien in many African Countries. This is certain instances may well be the case as her work in Nigeria has shown. However, owing to the prevalence of Western NGOs, International Donors and also to numerous state legislations in various countries within SSA, the term gender I would like to propose is now no longer an alien concept, though is it often still related to the sex of an individual.

### **2.3.1 Labour**

Labour is concerned with the division of labour within the household unit, paid and unpaid labour and the clearly visible 'men's jobs' and 'women's jobs', and also with unequal wages and unequal exchanges in the labour market and occupational segregation. Many of these divisions are culturally relative and not universal. For example, in some countries in SSA, plough based agriculture is seen as requiring physical strength, thus the justification as to why it should be men who fulfil this role in agrarian African societies (see Boserup, 1970). In other areas of the world( most notably south Asia) women are forbidden to plough as it is believed that they will pollute the plough if they come into contact with it (Agarwal, 1994). In relation to unequal wages, as Alvesson and Billing (2009) note, there is no denying that, even now in the twenty-first century, our societies are patriarchal societies, even if there has been an active drive towards the promotion of equal opportunities for both men and women. Women dedicate more of their time to non-market activities, or the private domain, thus the home (Folbre, 2009). Women earn less than men, they are underrepresented in positions of authority and they hold inferior positions within all spheres of life, both in the private and public domain, and are often victims of domestic violence. "It is still the case that the home and domesticity continue to be understood in feminine terms" (Morgan, 1996:81). Furthermore, as Guttentag and Secord (1983) propose, when a woman's labour is viewed as being less vital to the survival of the family, her relative social status will also decline. In Uganda, Zambia, Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso there is clear evidence that women work nearly twice as many hours as men (Bryceson, 1995). Bryceson (1995) and Gladwin (1991), argue that this is the case as women have what is commonly referred to as "triple responsibilities." They are socially expected not only to work in the gardens of their families and husbands as unremunerated family labour, but also to sell foodstuffs at the market where applicable. It is commonly known that the labour from women in SSA accounts for 80 percent of all food that is grown for household use (Birch et al., 2010) and that without women, the agricultural sector in SSA would grind to a halt and families would go hungry.

Women are also expected to undertake all domestic labour within a household, be this caring for the children, preparing food, washing, cleaning, etcetera. Not only do the triple responsibilities of women relate to what they do on a daily basis, but they also refer to the triple struggles that rural women in the global South encounter, these being as rural women living in underdeveloped countries, as rural women living in the most impoverished and most vulnerable areas within these countries and, finally, as women living in patriarchal societies (Bronstein, 1982).<sup>4</sup> As these duties are gender divided, in most cases the work that women do is not even seen and classified as being work but it is simply taken for granted that, as a woman, it is what she is expected and supposed to do. In relation to the workload of women and their responsibilities, an interesting observation is offered by Obbo (1980:213),

“When one adds up the amount of time women spend in food processing, caring for the sick within and without their families, and providing fellowship in times of death, it is a miracle that they have the time to be wives, mothers, and producers of food and cash crops.”

As I will discuss throughout this thesis, these are roles that women are introduced to very early on in life, thus supporting the argument that gender is a learned process.

### **2.3.2 Power**

Secondly, Connell's gender order is concerned with power. Power is the generic way of analysing authority, control and coercion within society's social relations. Power can be an inequality of resources and access to those resources.<sup>5</sup> In the context of this thesis the primary resource is land and, as I will also discuss, cattle. Power, also operates through ideologies of institutions, with the state being the pinnacle of power. Kabeer (1994) and Kabeer and Sabrahmanian (1996) propose that there are four variants of institutions: the

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<sup>4</sup> Bronstein's work was conducted in South America. However, her work is relevant to SSA owing to the following: the high levels of poverty that are evident on the continent, limited and often ineffective development programmes and the prevalence of rigid patriarchal systems.

<sup>5</sup> In relation to power over resources, Wharton (2011) proposes that in a marriage the person who is perceived as having the greater resources will have more power within the marriage and that unequal access to resources implies unequal power and, ultimately, dependency.

state, the community, the market and the family. Within these institutions there are various organizations, as Table One illustrates.

Location of institution	Organisational/structural form
State	Legal, military, etcetera
Market	Firms, multinationals, etcetera
Community	NGO's informal networks, village tribunals
Family/Kinship	Household, extended family, lineage groups and so on.

Table One. Location of institutions and structural form. Adapted from Kabber (1994).

In relation to gender and institutions, Acker (1992) argues that institutions embody aspects of gender and, that to say that an institution is gendered is to accept that

“gender is present in the processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distributions of power in the various sectors of social life. Taken as more or less functioning wholes, the institutional structures of...societies are organised along lines of gender... [these institutions] have been historically developed by men, currently dominated by men, and symbolically interpreted in from the standpoint of men in leading positions, both in the present and historically.”

This is expanded on by Andersen and Taylor (2006: 314), “institutions are patterned by gender, resulting in different experiences and opportunities for men and women”.

### 2.3.3 Cathexis

Thirdly, and lastly, Connell's gender order is concerned with cathexis/emotions, emotional relationships being those relationships between sexual partners. The emotional relationships that individuals have with their children, parents and others in their daily lives, be these positive emotions of love, respect, trust and solidarity or negative emotions, such as jealousy and distrust. Within these given relations there are rules and practices, all of which

can be and often are interconnected. The gender relations are commonly known as being the Gender regime. They are the substance to institutions, be these institutions micro or macro, informal or informal. The 'Gender Order' is the relationship between the regimes, or as it often referred to, the sum of the regimes. Patriarchal ideologies are what supports the regimes and gives foundation to the orders. It is these social powers that support the disempowerment of women. Therefore, I will now discuss the theoretical principles of patriarchy.

## **2.4 Patriarchy**

When discussing gender relations it is not possible to do so without discussing patriarchy and power, as fundamentally gender relations are concerned with who has the power and who controls how this power is used.<sup>6</sup> In effect power is closely related to dominance and the repression and subordination of others. As Walby (1990) proposes, for one to study gender, most especially gender inequality, it is imperative that the patriarchal ideologies of a society be addressed.

Patriarchy, in its most 'traditional' literal meaning, refers to the rule of the father or, as Weber (1968) observed, the authority vested in men as being the heads of a household. The Weberian analysis of patriarchy is linked to social hierarchies within kinship structures with a male having ultimate authority not only over his wife and female children, but also over younger males within the kinship and also over any other household dependents. It is a system that is feudal, with women ultimately always submissive to men. As Therborn asserts (2004:13)

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<sup>6</sup> Rowlands (1997) argues that there are 4 distinct categories of power/ power relations. These are: 1, Power over, (ability to resist manipulation, to be able to influence and coerce). Kabeer (1999) sees this as being a negative, as it implies that someone, or a category of actors, has the ability to undermine the agency of others. 2, Power to change, (create new possibilities, organise and change existing hierarchies). Kabeer (1999), believes that in essence the "power to" implies that even if an actor faces opposition from others that they can still pursue their own goals and desires, if they have the capacity to do so. The third category of power refers to, Power with, (acting in a group, increase power by collective action) and, finally, the fourth category of power refers to, Power from within, (enhancing self-respect and self-acceptance, increased individual consciousness).

“patriarchy has two basic intrinsic dimensions: the rule of the father and the rule of the husband, in that order. In other words, patriarchy refers to generational and to conjugal family relations or, more clearly, to generational and to gender relations.”

This is further expanded upon by Walby (1990:20), who asserts that patriarchy is “a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” and, as noted by Johnson (2005:5),

“ A society is patriarchal to the degree that it promotes male privilege by being male dominated, male identified and male centred. It is also organised around an obsession with control and involves as one of its key aspects the oppression of women.”

Walby (1990) proposes that patriarchy is not a homogeneous or universal system, and that the levels of patriarchy that one will encounter and be exposed to socially vary depending on where one lives and on other aspects of social position, such as class or ethnicity. In relation to SSA, SSA is known as having relatively strong patriarchal practices due to the strength of the institution of kinship (Jackson & Scott, 2002).

This would support why, for one to analyse patriarchy one needs to take into account both class and ethnic origins of those who are influenced by patriarchal systems. As with other social structures, it is by no means static (Jackson & Scott, 2002). This is supported by Majstrovic’ and Lassen (2011) who observe that until recently in the West and in other areas of the World, daughters would be expected upon marriage to fetch a bridewealth.<sup>7</sup> Even if this is no longer the case in most cultures within the West, it is still something that is common in SSA. This is a clear example that illustrates that women live under different patriarchal systems and that patriarchy is culturally specific. It also, illustrates that patriarchal practices of subordination are evolutionary and are by no means static. This would imply that the patriarchal practices that are evident in so many societies are capable of evolving and in doing so facilitate

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<sup>7</sup> In certain areas of Asia, (most specifically, India) it is still common that women take money and resources into a marriage, either for their husbands or for their husband’s families, even if it is illegal. It is a practice that is believed to cause the deaths of at least one woman every hour (Virmani, 2012).

women's emancipation. In relation to culture this is often used as a justification as to why women should be repressed, when in effect culture is simply part of the patriarchal system that is at the root of the oppression. As Majstrovic and Lassen note, patriarchy is deeply imbedded in "our taken for granted value systems and cultures." (2011:1).

Besides defining patriarchy, Walby (1990) proposes that patriarchy is composed of six structures; structures that focus on understanding the root causes of oppression. It is these proposed root causes that illustrate how patriarchal norms are able to maintain their hold and dominance over women. As a point of reference, all of the structures are interrelated and connected. They are also, however, independent of one another. It is these six dimensions that have an impact on gender relations, as illustrated in TableTwo.

Structure	Composition	SSA example of this form of oppression
<b>Production relations in the household</b>	Non paid work in the home, be this domestic work, childcare, food production. Tasks are assigned by sex.	Women in SSA are responsible for most, if not all, of domestic work, food production and childcare. <sup>8</sup>
<b>Paid Work</b>	Women are paid less, are excluded from certain areas of work, often found in less skilled jobs. Tasks are assigned by sex.	Women in SSA, if in paid work, often work in informal markets where there is no security, and they are restricted to selling food stuffs and selling home brew, less skilled jobs due to a lack of education. Those women in formal employment are often women who are defined as being elites. Women in SSA are often disadvantaged in education because they are socialised to be wives.
<b>The Patriarchal state</b>	States bias towards patriarchal interests. <sup>9</sup>	Women in SSA do hold large numbers of seats in various governments. However, these are held by elite women. Also policies that are often implanted by governments are gender blind and often contradictory.
<b>Male violence</b>	Women routinely experience violence on many levels.	States often refuse to intervene when there has been domestic violence. Violence towards women is often socially acceptable and the culprits are not brought to justice.
<b>Patriarchal relations in sexuality</b>	Double standards, often men see it as their 'right' to be able to have sex. <sup>10</sup>	In a lot of states in SSA, there is one rule for men and another for women when it comes to sexual relations.

<sup>8</sup> I am aware that this is also the case in other areas of the world. Thus, this is not something that is exclusive to women in SSA.

<sup>9</sup> This is something that is clearly evident in Uganda, as I will demonstrate in Chapters, Three, Five, Six and Seven.

<sup>10</sup> (Einsphar, 2010:13) *"men's exploitation of women, or the systematic transfer of women's sexual energies to men, constitutes a blatant form of men's domination of women and shows how patriarchy is bound up with heteronormativity as well."*



	<p>Homophobia is also evident in most countries in SSA.<sup>11</sup></p> <p>Compulsory heterosexuality. This is the case in Uganda as anything else is illegal.</p>	<p>Polygamy is legal in Kenya as in other areas of SSA. Socially it is also accepted for men to not only have wives but to have 'girl friends' as well. Neither of these things is possible for women.</p> <p>Men control women's sexual freedom by repressing their ability to choose.</p> <p>Sex in marriage is seen as right.</p> <p>Inequalities in heterosexual relations.<sup>12</sup></p>
<b>Patriarchal cultural institutions</b>	<p>The media, education institutions. Emphasise how we as women should behave, how we should look and how we should act.</p>	<p>In Uganda, the 'mini' skirt is banned. Women are not permitted to wear anything that is above the knee as it is being related to issues of rape and is seen as being morally indecent.<sup>13</sup></p> <p>The sexualisation of women, not only in SSA but also in the Global North.</p>

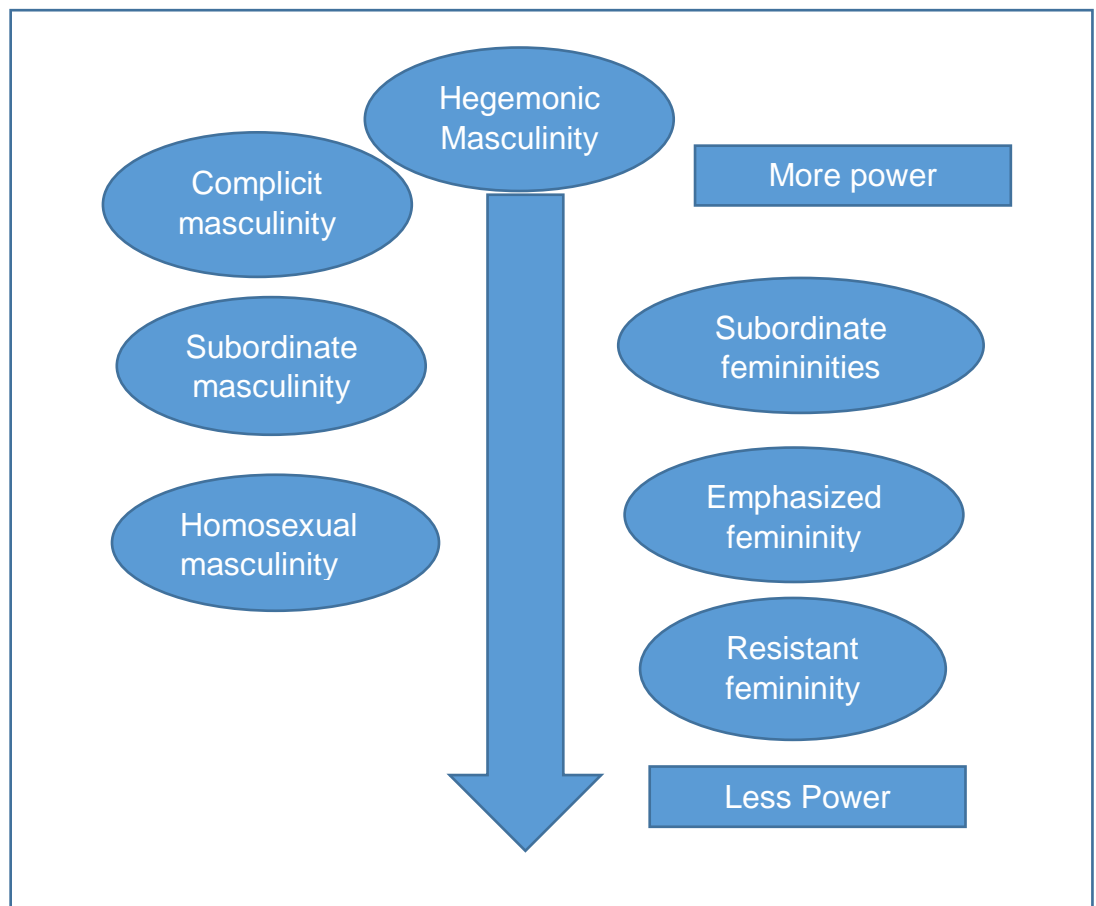
Table Two. Six structures of patriarchy, adapted from Walby (1990) with expansion.

<sup>11</sup> Same sex relations are illegal in 36 African States, of which Uganda is one. Simon Lokodo, the Minister for Ethics and Integrity, in a video in February 2014, said that homosexuality is worse than child rape as child rape is natural. See <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/ugandan-reverend-simon-lokodo-child-rape-better-homosexuality-video-1437976> for his views and comments.

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed discussion on inequalities in heterosexual relationships see: Jackson, S. (2006) Gender, sexuality and Heterosexuality. The complexity and limits of Heteronormativity. *Feminist Theory* 7 (1): 105-121.

<sup>13</sup> See <http://www.theguardian.com/fashion/fashion-blog/2014/feb/28/uganda-miniskirt-ban-attacks-women> for a detailed analysis of the proposed bill and its implications for women. This bill, like the Anti-Homosexuality bill, was proposed by Simon Lokodo. It is his appointment to the position of Minister for Ethics and Integrity that, I believe, illustrates a clearly defined patriarchal state Government.

Other than proposing six structures to patriarchy, Walby also proposes that there are two distinct forms of patriarchy, these being (1) Private patriarchy and (2) Public patriarchy. Private patriarchy is concerned with the oppression of women within their home environment. This oppression is manifested by the male patriarch. Public patriarchy relates to the subordinate roles of women in society and their segregation from male dominated power, both of which are clearly evident in SSA. Connell's extensive work on gender hierarchies also explains patriarchal discourse.



**Figure One. The gender hierarchy.**

Hegemonic masculinity is a concept from Connell's exploration of how our dominating ideas about what it means to be a man influence the behaviours of actual men in a given culture/society (see, Connell, 1987; 2001; 2005; 2009). It is a dominance that is not perpetuated through violence or force, rather through cultural dynamics that extend into not only the private realm, but also the social realm. She defines Hegemonic masculinity as being,

“the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (2009:77).

In relation to men in patriarchal cultures in SSA, the visible bearers of hegemonic masculinity are the heads of the household and or family, as it is they who are at the top of the gender hierarchy, with all other masculinities and femininities are seen as being subordinate. With regard to complicit masculinity, this, as Connell observes, is directly related to the patriarchal dividend. Men in this category may not be at the top of the gender hierarchy; they are however complicit in the subordination of women and the patriarchal normative. In the context of families in SSA, this could mean husbands, brothers, uncles and even sons, and all other men who benefit from the subordination of women.<sup>14</sup> In relation to Emphasized femininity, Emphasized femininity is believed to complement Hegemonic masculinity as it is oriented to accommodate the desires and interests of men.

In the context of Africa, more specifically Mozambique, Arnfred (2011) gives an interesting insight into not only the theorizing of gender, but also patriarchy. As with other feminists from the Global north, she does not dispute that women are subordinate to men, in fact she asserts that, women are increasingly becoming more subordinate. However, she also argues that women need not be referred to as the, ‘other’ as is often the case in Western thinking. Also and this is an important observation, gender oppression in its present form is not only related to patriarchal ideologies of power by male dominated systems, rather, “Gender oppression in its present form has been imported to Africa from the West through colonialism and Christianity, and from the East through Islam” (Arnfred, 2011:202). Even if this is the may be the case, regardless of the origins of patriarchy, and gender oppression, is does exist in SSA and it has the support of both men and women.

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<sup>14</sup> As indicated, Homosexual masculinity is at the bottom of the gender hierarchy for men, which, as noted, is specific to numerous countries within SSA, Uganda included.

### **2.4.1 Patriarchy and the supporting role of women**

For gender hierarchies and patriarchy to be successful in the repression of women, as discussed by Lerner (1986) patriarchal systems and the subordination of women can only be upheld if there is co-operation not only from men, but also from women. This is further supported by Sen (1990:126),

“there is much evidence that acute inequalities often survive precisely by making allies out of the deprived. The underdog comes to accept the legitimacy of the unequal order and becomes an implicit accomplice.”

Also, as noted by Johnson (2005), patriarchy encourages women to accept and to adapt to their position as the oppressed, even if it can undermine the possibility to bring about change. It is our gender defined social roles that are embedded in our social relations that support this. In effect patriarchy is the ultimate social structure of power (Connell, 1987). It is also something that we may have limited control over. Participating in patriarchy is something that is unavoidable as it is a power system that is handed down to us as soon as we enter into the world, especially if one lives in strict and rigid patriarchal societies (Johnson, 2005).

### **2.5 Empowerment, bargaining, negotiations and choice<sup>15</sup>**

If women are less powerful than men due to the patriarchal societies that women live in, how can women ever be empowered? Empowerment, like patriarchy, is culturally specific (Alkire et al., 2013). It is a concept that is highly debated and contested, as noted by Ibrahim and Alkire (2007) and Kabeer (1999). That said, Kabeer (1999) would argue that empowerment is intrinsically linked to disempowerment. If one is disempowered this implies that one has been denied the opportunity to choose, thus empowerment is about

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<sup>15</sup> Bargaining, choice, negotiation, agency and empowerment are all interconnected.

being able to make changes; to be able to choose. Fundamentally to be empowered one must have been previously disempowered. Gender empowerment is often believed to be hindered due to patriarchal gender hierarchies. For women to be equal and thus be empowered in SSA in all social relations the mechanisms, be these traditional or cultural, which support a patriarchal gender hierarchy need to be deconstructed and readdressed so that they support the inclusion of women in all social relationships.

Empowerment, however, is not simply a case of more female inclusion, as is so often the rhetoric that is voiced in development circles. It is, as numerous feminist scholars have proposed, fundamentally about facilitating people (especially women) to have control of their own lives within households and in society more widely (Kabeer, 1994 ). Empowerment can be achieved, as Mugenyi (1998:135) notes, by empowering women socio-economically and politically. In practical terms, women should be able to have

“access and control of factors of production on an equal basis with men... and participate in decision making at all levels from the household to national level.”

Kabeer (1994) also proposes that for women to be empowered one must identify what are the specific strategic and practical gender needs of women. In order for us to address the practical gender needs of women we first need to identify what are the socially accepted roles of women within their communities. As I have already discussed, the socially accepted roles in societies that are predominantly patriarchal are often related to a woman's position in the home.

### **2.5.1 Power within the family, reproduction**

When referring to power and the family, as Kabeer (1999:446) notes, in most areas of world, there are by no means always, “dichotomous distributions of power.” Decisions within a family are gendered. Women, for example, are often responsible for making everyday decisions that relate to children and the

welfare of their children. They often make the decisions on what to purchase at markets and how the household should be run on a day-to-day basis. Men on the other hand, as heads of the household, make decisions that pertain to economic issues within the family and, also as to how children should be educated, and which children should be educated. They also decide how many children a family should have. It is clear that the control over a woman's childbearing capacities is integral to patriarchy. As argued by Stichter and Parpart (1988:38), "the social relations which govern human reproductive behaviour serve to reflect, instil or reinforce the subordination of women." This assertion is supported by McDonough and Harrison (1979:14), "patriarchal oppression of women in the family is crucially connected with the need to control their fertility and sexuality." Furthermore Mackintosh (1977:122), notes, "The characteristic relation of human reproduction is patriarchy; that is control of women, especially of their sexuality and fertility, by men." A woman's sexuality is in affect regulated by its social constraints (Budhiraja et al., 2009). This is further supported by Tamale (2009:51) who argues that in SSA, most specifically Uganda, there is a direct link between, "a woman's sexuality and their subordinate status".

### **2.5.2 Agency**

Empowerment is also often seen as an expansion of an individual's agency. Agency, as proposed by Sen (1985:206), is, "what a person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important." This is further expanded on by Kabeer (1999), who emphasise that agency is not simply about having the ability to make decisions; it is a multi-layered process, that takes various forms. Specifically it encompasses, but is not limited to, one having the ability to bargain and to be able to negotiate. As argued by Einsphar (2010:4), one may consciously choose to be submissive and to be manipulated and to exercise deception. Agency can also be non-tangible.

### **2.5.3 Bargaining**

In relation to a woman's bargaining power within the home, the bargaining that takes place within homes that are patriarchal in nature is never simply determined by economic factors (Moore, 1992). Not only this, but bargaining within the home, as noted by Kandiyoti (1998), takes place under the guise of unwritten rules; rules that are related to conjugal contracts. Kandiyoti also proposes that bargaining within a home can be either passive or active resistance (Kandiyoti, 1988:27). Recently, Lodin (2012), argues that a woman's position to bargain may be influenced by her ability to have a fall-back position, insofar as if a marriage ends then a woman should be able to maintain the same standard of living as before and also the same social standing. In effect this makes sense; after all why would a woman choose to be destitute and to experience hardship? That said, as to it being a realistic possibility in SSA is open to much debate, especially in areas where acute poverty is the social norm and where women have little option other to rely on their husbands for economic support not only for them, but also for their children. Having a fall-back position is clearly intrinsically linked to resources and assets. This, as noted, contradicts Moore. It also implies that only wealthy women are able to bargain in marriages, which, as noted in Kandiyoti's (1988) paper, is not the case.<sup>16</sup>

Other than economic resources, a person's self-perception of his or her interests is also relevant to bargaining within the household (Lodin, 2012). How one bargains also influences a person's own well-being (see, Sen, 1990; Agarwal, 1997; Kabeer, 1991,1994).

### **2.5.4 Choice**

In relation to choice, accepting a subordinate role in society is far from straight forward. There are various reasons why women and men choose to accept their social position, as choice is related to how one perceives one's needs.

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<sup>16</sup> For a concise overview of bargaining within the family see Kandiyoti (1988). Specific reference is given to classic patriarchal systems.

The rationale behind why we make the choices that we make is often embedded in our everyday realities and histories (Kabeer, 1999). However, in there also exists a deeper level to our everyday realities, one that is, as Kabeer (1999:441) notes, “inscribed in the taken for granted rules, norms and customs within which everyday life is conducted.” In relation to customs, Bourdieu (1977) proposes that social customs are so deeply embedded within our everyday realities that they have been naturalized; in essence they are social practices that are taken ‘for’ granted as being unquestionable truths. Individual actors have so completely internalised the norms and values of their society that individual behaviour is merely a re-enactment of social norms. Practices and expectations become part of our ‘habitus’.<sup>17</sup> Culture becomes a word for describing, “that which constrains us... in the most effective way possible by shaping our will that seeks to assert its freedoms” (Kabeer, 2000:33).

This may explain why, as Berger (1999) notes, in SSA rural women will often continue to raise their daughters in the ‘traditional’ manner and instruct them that they, as women, are subordinate to men and to their future husbands, thus supporting the continuation of patriarchy, most notably within the institution that is the family.

## **2.6 Key institutions, the family, the household**

With this in mind, I will now discuss the institution that is the family and the role of women within the family. I have given focus to the institution of the family over the other institutions as proposed by Kabeer, as in rural areas of SSA patriarchy begins within the family and it is within a family that people have their primary lived experiences and realities.<sup>18</sup>

Family, as noted by Walby (1990) refers to a group of individuals who are related/connected to each other, either through marriage or blood. They are

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<sup>17</sup> For an overview of Habitus as proposed by Bourdieu, see: Hiller, J. and Rooksby, E. (eds) (2005) *Habitus a sense of place*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Padstow. Ashgate.

<sup>18</sup> I do acknowledge the role of the state and the other institutions, as proposed by Kabeer, and will make reference to this (especially the institution that is the state) in the following chapters.



social units based also on parenthood (Moser, 1993) or, as Giddens and Sutton (2013) would include, also adoption. A household, on the other hand, is something very different. People may be related to one another, for example women and their children, husbands and their wives; however, a household is more complex than these relations as a household can also include people who are not kin. In this sense a household is composed of all individuals who live within the same unit. They share the facilities that are available to those members, in essence living spaces. They are, as Moser (1993:19) observes, “residential units based on co-residence for the purpose of reproduction, consumption and socialisation.” Doss (2013) propose that in SSA households are not static but evolving and that they can be both constructed and deconstructed.

In the case of SSA many people, be these men or women, are heads of their own households. However, owing to communal living, different members of different individual households also share living spaces. Households in effect are comprised of large units, many of which are family. An example being the patrilocal family system, which is often consanguineal and practices patrilineality, and is common in SSA and, specifically, in Eastern Africa. Patrilocal family systems are centred around the males of a family.<sup>19</sup> It is expected that when a man comes of age and marries that he and his wife will live on the land of the husband’s father. In turn the children that are produced will do the same. Each household may have their own home, a place to sleep and to prepare meals. However, they will share other facilities. It is also the head of the family who has ultimate control and power over the household, which, as noted, will be the father or the eldest male.

It is the ideologies of such families that create a blur as to what constitutes a family and a household. This is noted specifically by anthropologists such as

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<sup>19</sup> Consanguineal families usually comprise no more than three generations of family. They often see mature adults (usually males and their wives) supporting the elderly parents, though they have their own households; households which will be near to the household of their parents or even within the same compound. There is continuous cooperation between the ‘individual’ households and this can include but it not limited to, economic support, looking after and caring for each other’s children and labour support (Potash, 1995).

Yanagisako (1979) and Guyer (1981). In relation to a household, households within the consanguineal family structure also vary as to their organisation and composition. It is not uncommon, for example, to see women and their children living on their own, even if they are married; this is especially relevant in polygamous unions. Men in polygamous unions will either have their own dwelling or they will divide their time between their wives. Also in some societies all of the men of the individual households may eat with one another and the women and children eat separately. How food is produced and how resources are allocated may also change. Also, for example, within the consanguineal family there can either be collective work for food production or food production can be specific to individual households, or spousal (Potash, 1995). Patrilineality and patrilocality are essential for patriarchal rule and dominance. It is the emphasis that is given to the male members of the family that gives them so much control, not only over women, but also over their children. With this in mind, a question to ask ourselves is, “how does this family structure frame women’s lives?”

### **2.6.1 Women in the family, wives and mothers.**

African women’s social roles within the family define them as being mothers, daughters, sisters and wives (Obbo, 1980). They are identities that are dependent upon heterosexual kinship relations (Jackson, 1999). In African family structures, as in other areas of the world where women are faced with limited opportunities to education and where traditional practices and cultural expectations are at their strongest, girls are born, become daughters, they marry and become wives and they have children and become mothers.<sup>20</sup> Many women pass through different stages, not only in terms of age, but also marriage status. Nonetheless the condition of ‘femaleness’ retains many common features, although at the same time, this differs for different groups of women.

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<sup>20</sup> Though not always in that order. And, this is a similar pattern that is repeated all over the world.

In areas of the world where patriarchal ideologies are the social norm, as is the case of SAA, it is not uncommon to observe that both marriage and motherhood are held in high esteem and glorified. As observed by Jacobs (2014:177), “women often hold a symbolic significance as mothers”. Though, as already discussed, elements of motherhood are controlled by men owing to the power that men in patriarchal societies have over a woman’s sexuality and also her reproductive abilities.

### **2.6.2 Marriage and the payment of bridewealth<sup>21</sup>**

In relation to marriage, marriage, like motherhood, is eulogized in traditional and cultural practices. It is one of, if not the most important social relationships that there is, as not only does it involve the prospective bride and groom, but it also involves the families of those who wish to marry. In effect it is a social institution that brings families and households together. When women marry, especially in patrilocal family systems, they move out of the family home and move into the home of their husband. Upon marriage they become a member of the husband’s kin. Women, in essence, leave one family and are brought into another. When marrying into a patrilocal system it is the woman’s responsibility to adapt to the ways of the husband’s family, to his kin. As Potash (1995) observes, when women marry into these families they do retain links to their birth kin. However, the rights that they have in their birth kin change; as too do the claims that they can make to their birth kin. For example, when a woman marries into another kin, in numerous areas of SSA, of which the Acholi region of Uganda is one, women lose all claims that they may have been able to have to their father’s lands as they are expected to get land from their husband’s kin. Also their rights to partake in formal kin discussions will be curtailed. An interesting point that Potash (1995) raises is that even if women do move to live with other kin, upon marriage the loyalties of the husband will more often than not remain with his kin and will not alter. Women, in effect though married, are a secondary priority. A women’s secondary role is supported by Yngstrom from his work in Tanzania (2002: 22), “Women exist

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<sup>21</sup> Even if there are various types of marriage in SSA, for the purpose of this thesis, when I discuss marriage, I am referring to customary marriages (these being marriages that are governed by the rules and laws of clans and tribes and are overseen in accordance with customary laws). The payment of bridewealth is what gives a customary marriage its validity.

only as the wives of household heads; their actions are considered secondary or unimportant” (2002: 22). And Burnet from his work in Rwanda (2000), “ A woman does not have an identity; she takes her husband’s.” This can be exacerbated even more if the women are co-wives whereby their husbands are polygamist. Women in these unions can often find themselves competing, not only for the favour of their husbands, but also for key and vital resources, of which land is one (Potash, 1995; Asiimwe, 2002). Fertility rates in polygamist unions are also higher, as women compete to have male heirs (Ellis et al., 2006). Historically though, as observed by Arnfred (2011) polygamist unions were seen as being a positive union as they facilitated not only reproduction, but also increased production within a family on a husbands land within farming communities.

Even if there are those who see wives as being secondary to their husbands being married gives women an elevated status and it is an institution that can also in some instance afford women rights to resources, of which land is one such resource and power. Ryle (2011:159),

“in many different ways, marriage is a valued status for women and a social role that comes with some degree of power, even if that power has varying levels of limits placed upon it.”

### **2.6.3 The relevance of bridewealth.**

Prior to most marriages in SSA, (these being exogamous customary marriages) the payment of ‘dowry’ or bridewealth will be made. It is the payment of bridewealth, or dowry that gives a customary marriage its validity (Hague et al., 2011).<sup>22</sup> It is also as I will discuss the payment of bridewealth that not only affords women power, but also exacerbates inequality. Otiso (2006) asserts that bridewealth is traditionally given to show appreciation to the future bride’s family for them bringing their daughter into the world and for compensating them for their loss. This is why traditionally the gifts that were (and in some circumstances still are) given are items that reflect the loss of

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<sup>22</sup> Exogamous marriages being marriages that exist outside of one’s family and clan and or social group. For example in the case of my research it is prohibited that members from within the Twero clan, (this being my clan) may marry one another.

labour and productivity of the daughter on her father's land, these being cattle and hoes. Other than cattle and farming equipment, in both rural and urban areas, owing to modernisation and the introduction of a cash economy, money is also often given/received. Moreover, bridewealth as asserted by Arnfred (2011:71) is not a price, but, "It is a token of a new or reinforced relationship between two family groups" which is related not only to the relationship between the prospective bride and groom and their respective families, but, also between men. As Arnfred (2011:71) continues to propose, in effect, bridewealth, is, "the very glue holding society together".

Even if bridewealth is seen by some as not referring to the acquisition of a woman and that it is merely a symbolic gesture, there are numerous people (both academic and those who advocate for women's rights and equality), who would challenge this, for example, Goody and Tambiah. Goody and Tambiah (1973:17) propose that bridewealth is about economic transactions, with its main function being to redistribute property: "bride wealth...forms a societal fund, a circulating pool of resources, the movement of which corresponds to the movement of rights over spouses, usually women." Bridewealth having a strong proprietary character is also supported by Therborn (2004).

Bridewealth is seen not only as having a proprietary nature to it, but also as something that should be abolished, as it both supports gender inequality, and leaves many women open to abuse and years of servitude (Malinga & Ford, 2010).<sup>23</sup> Women's activist groups in Uganda, including the Ugandan Association of Women's Lawyers (FIDA) and Ugandan female Parliamentarians, have tried, though unsuccessfully, since the 1970s, to make bridewealth illegal. In fact Uganda's 2005 Poverty Eradication Action Plan, highlighted bridewealth as being the greatest obstacle to women's equality in Uganda and to their empowerment (IMF, 2005). Even if this the case, as with proposing that bridewealth is in fact not about the 'buying' of a person, Arnfred (2011: 72) argues that Western thinking is misguided and that bridewealth does not limit the freedoms of women, rather it, "keeps people alive" and that

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<sup>23</sup> Hague et al. (2011) in their participatory research study in Uganda, conclude that bridewealth has an 'overwhelming' negative impact on rural women and that bridewealth is in effect the commoditization of women.

it is a tribute to women. As I will discuss in the data chapters, there is no denying that bridewealth does bring families together and that it affords some women with a certain sense of security and it is a tribute to some women. However, there is also a strong case that it is seen as, in the context where I conducted my field work proprietary and that it does limit the freedoms of women. This is especially the case if a woman becomes a widow and also if a marriage were to break down.

If there is a breakdown in a marriage where bridewealth has been paid, specifically in Uganda, and a woman wishes to leave her husband, then she must first repay any bridewealth that was 'paid' for her, even if the token of appreciation was given to her family and not to her as an individual. Owing to high levels of poverty amongst women, and especially women in rural areas who have limited access to a cash economy, this is simply not possible.<sup>24</sup> In the 2009 draft of the Marriage and Divorce bill in Uganda, there was a draft article stipulating that bridewealth should be non-refundable. However, like making bridewealth illegal, this has not yet happened. (That said, in August 2015, the Ugandan supreme court, ruled that the repayment of bridewealth was, unconstitutional and dehumanising to women (Mwesigwa, 2015) Only time will tell if the practice will change) This leaves numerous women with no option but to stay in marriages that support inequality, support and reinforce subordination, and often feature high levels of domestic violence. Rates of domestic violence in the North of Uganda are believed to be as high as 78% (Malinga & Ford, 2010). Oosterom (2011) also proposes that domestic violence is a problem in the North, especially in the Acholi region.

Even if as discussed, bridewealth is seen by some as supporting the subordination of women, if bridewealth is not paid then a customary marriage will lose its validity and a cultural tradition that is supported not only by men but also by women, will be lost. I shall refer back to this in the data chapters. Also, if women are unable to marry due to traditional practices being

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<sup>24</sup> Rates of divorce are much less than in areas where bridewealth is not as common or where it is seen as an outdated cultural practice (Hague et al., 2011).

challenged then they will be unable to fulfil their socially expected role as wives.

#### **2.6.4 Power over children**

Other than having to pay back any bridewealth that has been paid, if there is a breakdown in a marriage, women on most occasions will also lose their children (Obbo, 1980).<sup>25</sup> On the rare occasions that children do leave their father's kin with their mother, any rights that women are given on their father's lands are rights that are not transmitted to their children, as socially they are the children of another kin.<sup>26</sup> As Oboler (1986) observes, in Kenya children of mothers who are divorced may have lived most of their lives on the lands of their mother's kin. However, once they reach adulthood they are expected to leave and to go back to their father's kin. It is clear from this patriarchal system that women are in a vulnerable position and one that is supported by cultural practices, which, as noted, is simply a manifestation of patriarchy within social relations.

Even if marriage is socially held in such high esteem in SSA, there are women who do not marry. There are various reasons behind this. However, it is an active choice by many, as I will now discuss.

#### **2.6.5 Forgoing marriage**

Refusing marriage in rural areas of SSA is often seen as insulting tradition, or opposing patriarchal ideologies and practices owing to the importance that is given to marriage. Also, in many cultures within SSA a woman is not seen as being a 'real' woman unless she is married. That said, as Berger (1999)

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<sup>25</sup> In the Luo areas of East Africa, as with other areas of SSA, if a marriage breaks down it is common practice for any children born in that relationship to remain with the kin of the father. This is because when a child is born into a patrilineal system, which, in SSA is generally the case, they immediately upon birth become the property of their father's kin, insofar as that is where they have their primary rights and responsibilities. As noted by Sticher and Parpart (1988:5), "women cannot create descent relations or reproduce social ties; filiation only operates through men. Women are dispossessed of their children to the benefit of men."

<sup>26</sup> In this instance I am referring to women who reside in rural areas of SSA, most notably Uganda, and to women who rely on land for their food needs, owing to them residing in agrarian communities.

observes, more and more women are choosing not to marry.<sup>27</sup> Berger (1999) proposes that women are increasingly aware that if they do marry that they will need to be submissive to their husbands and to their husband's kin and that they will often not be seen as being equal. Not only are women choosing not to marry, but also there are now a growing number of women choosing to have children, though remaining single mothers through choice. The justifications for not wanting to follow in tradition are often related to children. Those who prefer single motherhood are not at risk of losing their children as culturally the children belong to the mother's kin and not to the father's kin.<sup>28</sup> Women are also aware of the changes that marriage will bring to their lives, which, as noted, are not always positive (Schuster, 1979). It is women who often choose to be single that have what Moser (1993) terms 'guest' husbands; these being men who make no social commitment to their 'wives', but who enjoy and enter into casual relations with women.<sup>29</sup> These women are often left on their own to bring up the children that are produced through such relations and they are women who receive little or no financial support from the father of their children.<sup>30</sup> To an outsider looking in, this may sound like a depressing situation to be in; after all being a lone parent is not an easy task. However, as they are on their own they are in effect their 'own' women as there is no immediate patriarch who controls them in their home.<sup>31</sup> These women, as Chant (2007) observes, dispel the myth that women have no agency and that they are unable to choose. Chant also implies that women who are not married or who are in effect heads of their own households have greater rights and freedoms than those who are married. Yes, these women may be poorer than if they

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<sup>27</sup> As Claassen and Smythe (2012) observes, marriage rates in South African have been declining since 1960.

<sup>28</sup> If a previously unmarried woman who has children does marry, any children that she had prior to marrying will need to make claim to the land of their mother's father. They have no right to make claim to the land of the husband of their mother as there is no blood connection.

<sup>29</sup> I would like to propose that by women doing this, they are exercising their sexual freedom and displaying power.

<sup>30</sup> Owing to the gender divisions of labour that are evident in societies in SSA. I would like to argue that if women are not married this will not impact on them too much as married men do not in general get involved with childcare.

<sup>31</sup> It is open to debate as to whether there is no immediate patriarch, as women who choose this life style will often still reside on the lands of their fathers; thus there is always the presence of a patriarch. However, from my research women who have chosen this path are generally left to their own devices and are contented to be on their own. There are multiple reasons why these women choose not to marry again and domestic violence is one of them.



were married and not heads of their households. However, by choosing to be on their own with their children is seen as a trade-off and a trade-off worth making (Chant, 1997).

#### **2.6.6 Female Headed Households<sup>32</sup>**

In addition to women who choose to be on their own and not to marry, there are also other types of female headed households (FHH). Moser (1993) proposes that there are two types of FHH, *de jure* and *de facto*. In a *de jure* household the male member of the family (the patriarch) has to be permanently absent, thus *de jure* household heads are women who are either widowed or divorced. For a house, to be *de facto* the patriarch needs to be 'temporarily' absent from the home, (and they are usually married to the female who is left residing in the home on their own). This could mean that the patriarch is away for work. The length of time away, however, is of no significance, as if the woman is married, even if her husband does not live with her, he will still be classified as being the head of the household. This supports Weber's analysis of patriarchy. A point raised by Moser (1993) is that in *de facto* FHH, the female is often seen socially as being a dependent, even if it is she who in effect has sole responsibility for household food production, for domestic duties and for managing the family. Moser (1993) believes that if a woman is in a *de facto* household that she is given a false sense of independence as ultimately it is the patriarch who will have the final say on how his home is run.

### **2.7 Women and land**

As the focus of this thesis is on gender relations and land access, I will now discuss the importance that land plays in the lives of women and how women access land in SSA.

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<sup>32</sup> As proposed by Slavchevska (2015), defining headship is problematic, as headship can be related to numerous factors of which the following are included: decision making, power, customs, subjective perceptions and self-worth, labour and non-labour income.

Land is the primary resource for the majority of Africans living in rural SSA (Holden et al., 2009). It is a resource that people rely on for economic stability due to the limited alternatives of employment that are available in the majority of rural SSA and for their household food needs (Palmer, 2008). It is also a resource that plays an intrinsic part in people's cultural heritage and identity. Owing to prevailing patriarchal systems of power within the agrarian societies of SSA, women's access to land is largely indirect. Women access land through their roles as mothers, wives and daughters, whereas men access land through lineage, ownership and inheritance (Moser, 1993). Land, in effect, is a symbol of male dominance, a dominance that is perpetuated over women (Palmer, 2008), with the main LTS being variations of the customary land tenure system (Englert & Daley, 2008).<sup>33</sup>

### **2.7.1 Customary Land Tenure**

Customary Land Tenure is by no means static but it is a LTS that is continuously evolving (Englert & Daley, 2008). Therefore, "Generalizations are difficult and require extreme caution" (Burke & Kobusingye, 2014:11). That said, across SSA, CLTS have similar characteristics, these being that no one person can own the land (Rugadya et al., 2007), and that the land, be it clan, communal or nomadic, is to be held in trusteeship for future generations (Bulender & Alma, 2011) and that it should not be sold. If it is sold then a sale can only happen if all members of the family agree. It is predominantly patrilineal, (though in some countries, most specifically Mozambique, matrilineal inheritance is practiced) and all categories of women, be they married, single or widows, are to be afforded continuous access rights, be this on the lands of their husbands or their fathers. It is managed by the head of a family, who will be male. It is also a system that is governed by customary laws (Arnfred, 2011). An example of how CLT works in relation to married women in East Africa is what Kevane (2004) refers to as the "*house property complex*." The house property complex is a system that is practiced upon marriage. It is a land access system that is concerned with user rights and not independent ownership, and it is a system that is applicable to land that is customary land.

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<sup>33</sup> There are other LTS within SSA of which freehold and leasehold are included; however, the one that is most commonly used is customary.

It refers to a man giving an area of land to his wife/wives for their homestead, and a garden where they can grow food and also raise cattle. A woman's continuing access to this land is through her husband and any male children that she has. If when her husband dies she has no male children, the land will be reallocated and inherited by her late husband's brothers or other male members of the clan (Ellis et al., 2006). If she has sons, then she will be the custodian of the land until the male children are old enough to take responsibility for the land. "Land is availed to women due to their reproductive role, the responsibility to nurture children, and not in their own right" (Wanyeki, 2003: 311) and, as it would appear, due to the sex of their children. Although, as I will discuss, in the Acholi region of Uganda even if a widow does not have male children, she is traditionally expected to remain on the lands of her husband as bridewealth will have been paid for her. Women who do not marry, or who return to their natal lands are to be afforded land for themselves and, if they have children that are of their natal clan, also enough land for their children. Women though, as already discussed, are socially expected to marry, so in numerous cases, women are expected to acquire land upon marriage.

Even if CLT is the prevailing LTS in SSA, and even if it is theoretically a LTS that affords every member of a family continued access rights to land, there is a general consensus from the international community and many feminist scholars (for example Manji, 2009; Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2006), legal rights activists and Civil Society Organizations (CSO) that CLT directly and indirectly discriminates against women.<sup>34</sup> The result of this is that CLT is consequently believed to be exacerbating rural poverty and food insecurity (also see: Ynsigrom, 2009; Razavi, 2007; Place, 2009). Also, other than CLT being seen as contributing to gender inequality and exacerbating poverty, CLT is also seen as an obstacle to economic development. In developing countries, rural subsistence farmers, De Soto (2000) claims, own as much as US\$ 9.3 trillion

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<sup>34</sup> However, this is not to say that other LTS that prevail in SSA are not as discriminatory; however it is customary tenure where the emphasis on inequality and discrimination is often focussed.

in assets to which they do not have individual title. Land title is seen as being the key to economic development in SSA (Peters, 2009; Deininger & Binswanger, 1999). However as, Nyamu-Museumbi (2006) notes, what De Soto and others who support the ideologies of the World Bank propose is gender blind, as individual title could exacerbate already present gender inequalities as the land would be registered in the name of the patriarch and not with the female members of a family, or, more specifically, wives. Also, individual title could make an already precarious situation for women worse because under individual title women often lose what few rights they do have to land (Jacobs, 2010), these being rights that are afforded to them through traditional and cultural practice. Also, as proposed by Veit (2011), not all CLT are uniformly discriminative against women.

### **2.7.2 Women's need for land and productivity**

Other than the issue of gender equality, why is it so important for women to have access to land, be this access, user rights or ownership? The rationale behind women having access, control and rights to land is securely grounded (Englert & Daley, 2008). There is a vast amount of literature that supports that if women have greater control, access and, ultimately, rights to land they will be more empowered and that not only they, but also their families and society as a whole will benefit, as Holt-Gimenez and Patel (2009: 219) note,

“it is widely acknowledged that improved women's access, control and ownership of land/natural and reproductive resources, is a key factor in eradicating hunger and rural poverty.”

Also, as noted by Sen(1990), in agrarian communities the greater the rights to land, the more bargaining power a woman will have within the household, especially if she is married. However, as Englert (2003) also observes, even if women do acquire, access, control or have greater rights to land the benefits, as proposed by Holt-Gimenez and Patel, will not necessarily translate to all members of a family or even to women themselves. Simply having land will not end poverty or (as one could assume) increase food security, as having land alone is not enough to decrease poverty and or food security. The reason

being that there are multiple factors, be these internally within the family or external factors that need to be taken into consideration, of which gender relations, and the capacities of the individual and climate are just a few examples. As Quisumbing and Pandolfelli (2009) discuss, even if women (most specifically FHH) do acquire land, they are more often than not, not in a position to cultivate the land as they lack vital resources, be these high quality seeds, farming equipment or fertilizers, to name just a few. Additionally as Carr (2008) notes, women who gain access to land through a male member of their family may be given such small holdings, owing to both their perceived economic capacity and to their perceived inferior physical capacities, that they will need to be more selective in what they cultivate and also that the yield that they produce will be less. As noted by Larson et al. (2015), female managed plots are believed to produce between 4 and 40% less than male managed plots. Aguiar et al. (2014) estimate the figure to be between 20 and 30%. As Deere and Doss (2006) assert, it is due to this that women are often the first in their communities forced to adopt damming coping strategies to maintain stable food consumption.

Low productivity is attributed to being resource poor, as noted by Holden et al. (2001), from studies that they conducted in Ethiopia. They found that productivity is low if women do not have oxen and if there is no male labour. Also if women do not have access to fertiliser, this will decrease productivity (Ongaro,1990). Lower productivity on plots that are managed by women is also supported by Peterman et al. (2011). However, from their research in Uganda they note that crop productivity is at its lowest when there is mixed gender ownership. They attribute this to the possible bargaining difficulties that can and may occur within a household between men and women and also children.<sup>35</sup>

A point that warrants attention is that Quisumbing (1996), in her study conducted in Kenya, concludes that if women have the same access to key agricultural resources and land their food security will increase and the yields of key staples, crops, such as cowpeas, beans and maize will increase by as

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<sup>35</sup> Their evidence is by no means conclusive and they do state that further research is needed.

much as 22%. Also, as observed by Gilbert et al. (2002), in Malawi, if women are able to use the same amount of fertilizer as men, the yields that they produce will be the same. This supports what Chant asserts about FHH. Also, it is not gender that affects crops production; it is how woman access resources like fertilizer that negatively affects crop production (Larson, et al., 2015). Primarily though, as noted by Slavchevska (2015), even within the vast literature that is concerned with crop production and gender there is no clear agreement within the academic and policy community on how the gender of the producer influences a farmer's productivity and the subsequent outputs from their labour.

## **2.8 Women and Food Security**

Having alluded to food security in the previous section I will now discuss why issues that pertain to food security are of importance, its relevance in SSA, and also the theoretical debates that pertain to it. Firstly a question to address is why is SSA of importance when discussing food security and/or food insecurity? There are several justifiable reasons as to why SSA warrants our attention. SSA is the only region of the world where poverty and undernourishment have been increasing over the past 20 years and where those living on less than US\$1 per day have become poorer (Staatz and Dembèle, 2007). SSA also has the largest proportion of ultra-poor people who live on less than \$0.50 per day (IFPRI, 2009). As Frayssinet (2010) notes, this poverty remains a strongly rural phenomenon. Other than this, food security in SSA is rarely out of the academic, policy and media spotlights. We are bombarded from NGOs and international agencies by images of malnourished children who live in rural areas of SSA on a daily basis. Celebrities and fame-seeking politicians are often seen to be supporting NGO driven campaigns to end world hunger; campaigns which usually give specific emphasis to those living in SSA. From the way that the continent is portrayed in the Western media, one could be forgiven for thinking that all Africans were on the brink of starvation and that they are defenceless victims of poverty.

The ethics of the Western media will not be discussed here; however how they distort the realities of those living in SSA is questionable.

That said, there is no denying that food insecurity in SSA is a problem for millions of people, as Table Three illustrates.

Year	1990-1992	2000-02	2005-07	2008-10	2012-14
<b>Number of people undernourished in millions</b>	176	202.5	205.3	211.2	214.1
<b>% of world's population undernourished in SSA</b>	33.3	29.8	26.5	24.4	23.8

Table Three: Undernourishment in Sub Saharan Africa from 1990 until 2014. (FAO, 2014)

At any given time since 1990 either one-third or one-quarter of people in SSA have been classified as being undernourished. Three-quarters of Africans who suffer from food insecurity are believed to be women and girls (UNIFEM, 2005). As Miller asserts (1993:22),

“Gender is used as the basis for systems of discrimination which can, even within the same household provide that those designated “male” receive more food and live longer, while those designated “female” receive less food to the point that their survival is drastically impaired.”

It is evident from Table Three that even if the numbers of those affected by food insecurity in SSA as per FAO has decreased, there are still problems with food insecurity. This is attributed to increasing birth rates, continuous conflict, especially in South Sudan and the DRC, and under investment by both international donors and national governments. Climate change is also believed to be having a major impact. In relation to climate change, as we witnessed in 2010 in both Niger and Chad (Rice, 2010), up to 9 million people were potentially faced by chronic food insecurity, attributable to climate change. At the time, it was a situation that was frequently compared to the 1984 Ethiopian famine, where over 1 million people died (Foy, 2010).

Other than these factors, economic instability and weak purchasing power are also seen as being root causes for the high levels of food insecurity in SSA. Lastly, as I have noted too, land rights and how one accesses land are important factors.

### **2.8.1 Defining food security**

With this in mind, what does it mean to be food secure? Defining food security can be ambiguous as it is constantly changing. This can be attributed to several multidisciplinary concepts that in reality take into consideration non-food factors, of which, economic, political, demographic, cultural and technical aspects are included (European Commission, 2009). That said, the broadly accepted current working definition of an individual's food security is:

“Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for a healthy and active life” World food summit (1996).

In analysing this definition, a definition that was first developed by the World Bank in 1996, there are immediate areas that should and need to be analysed. As Haan (2008) notes, it is a definition that primarily lacks clarity. If we first take the word security, it is clearly evident in this context that emphasis is placed on the physical component of the meaning of secure and not the psychological. In relation to psychological resilience, self-perception of an individual's vulnerability - both physical and or emotional is omitted from this definition. This is something that Maxwell and Smith (1992) and Maxwell (1988) would argue as being problematic as subjective perception is a fundamental component in assessing one's food security and or insecurity. Other than a bias towards the physical, how are we to define a specific quantity of food? At present the various UN agencies and most specifically the World Food Programme, (WFP) and the Food and Agricultural Organisation, (FAO) use a dietary supply calculator to ascertain the levels of malnutrition within a given country. This has general validity. However, the dietary needs of individuals vary from one individual to another, owing to the type of work that a given individual partakes in. Gender and age also need to be taken into



consideration, as too does the individual's size, health, the environment where they reside and his or her daily behaviour (Payne et al., 1994). Other than supply, in this case dietary energy supply, what foods are deemed as being nutritionally of value, so that they allow us to lead active and healthy lives? What an individual may deem as being nutritionally sound in one area of the world may be the direct opposite in another and, as Oomen (1988) asserts, cultural preferences surely should be taken into account. Also in areas of the world where there is acute poverty if someone does not have economic access to food in monetary terms but grows enough food for household consumption, albeit of limited variety, as is often the case in SSA, would this imply that an individual or a household is not food secure?

With regards to limited choice, if some individuals only have access to minimal choices of foodstuffs but are not hungry, does this also imply that they are food insecure? With regards to the nutritional component of this definition I would like to shift focus from the global South, where food insecurity is usually referred to, and focus my attention in the global North. It could be argued that millions of people in the global North could also be classified as being food insecure owing to their poor diets. These are diets that do not support the notion of a healthy and active life as they can contribute to numerous health problems, including, but not limited to, diabetes and obesity.

If we are to take this definition at face value, other issues that are clearly lacking from this definition include the various levels and severity of food insecurity proposed by Devereux (2001) and also alluded to by the European Commission (2009). Seasonal hunger too is a norm for millions of people all over the world, especially in SSA (Devereux et al., 2008); seasonal hunger has been attributed to an individual's or a household's inability to resist shocks, owing to vulnerability.

Finally the working definition of food security also does not address what could be referred to as the food security chain, this being other than an individual's food security; a household's food security is also relevant. As Senauer (1990) notes, numerous studies that related to inter household food distribution were conducted in the 1980s, both in SSA and in Asia. What was noted from these

studies, is that in general within a household the distribution of high nutritional food tended to favour the patriarch. Those most at risk of not receiving enough adequate nutritional food are young girls, followed by other females within a household, which would, as noted above, support what UNIFEM said some 20 years later. It is these studies, along with studies that were conducted by Kabeer (1991, 1995) and Hart (1986), that illustrate that there can be various degrees of food security within a household and that food security is often related to the role that one plays within the household. Food being allocated to men over women within a household is also supported by Chen et al. (1981) and Sen (1990). However, what is lacking from these studies is a justification as to why it is the patriarch who fares better in the allocation and distribution of food. Also, there is no explanation given for why women would forgo food when it is they who are responsible for not only the production of foods that are for household consumption, (as discussed earlier in this chapter, women in SSA are responsible for the majority of food that is grown for household food consumption, this being one of their gender roles), but also for their preparation. As Arnfred, observes (2011: 258), “ Food is a female domain and a basis for female authority”. This is not to say that gender relations are the only factor. However, they are seen as being influential. It also depends on the formation of the household; as Chant (2007) observes, female headed households are often seen as being the most vulnerable in society (Finne, 2001). However, there is evidence to support that they are and can be more food secure than households that are male headed (Moore & Vaughan, 1994; Blumberg, 1995; Chant, 1997). This would support that women are not completely powerless in patriarchal societies and that they do possess agency, capacity and power. This is supported by Chant (1997), who argues that in relation to food security FHH are more likely to be able to exercise greater control over the resources that they have and their food security can be higher than households that are male headed.

Other than the definition that is used by UN agencies, with specific reference to SSA, Alinyo and Leahy (2012) proposes that food security is related to the following: the gender division of labour within rural agricultural communities, who controls cash resources within a family, the cycle for planting crops,

harvesting crops and the time that the crops will be sold. That is if there is excess, or, as is often the case, even when there is not excess.

It is clear from the discussion presented above that the working definition of food security is limited in scope and that it is not easy to say if women are more prone to food insecurity than men, even though some evidence supports this argument. However, they are also capable, if the conditions are conducive, of being more food secure.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented three bodies of theory. Connell's work on gender relations illustrates that power relations between femininities and masculinities are visible in all of our social interactions within society and that it is the gender order that influences this through the rules of the gender regime. The gender order is socially sustained by patriarchal and male dominated practices and beliefs.

In conceptualising and analysing patriarchy I drew on the work on Silvia Walby. Other than defining patriarchy, she proposes that patriarchy is sustainable and enforced through six structures of oppression, and that patriarchy, like the gender order, is only sustainable if women are complicit. It is these elements of theory that are visible within the lives of women in SSA, especially within the institution of the family.

In relation to a woman's position within the family, I have shown that patriarchal ideologies of power are fundamental in the repression of women, be they married women, single women or widows. Such repression is possible due to the control that men have over a woman's sexuality and reproductive ability, and also how the payment of bridewealth supports the subordination of women. That said, even if many women conform to their socially constructed gender roles and inhabit a lower position on the gender hierarchy, women can actively use their ability to bargain and to choose to do this, especially in the household, and that there are negatives and positives to the institution of marriage.

How women access land when the prevailing LTS is CLT is contingent on gender relations, be these with their husbands or their father and his lineage. Even if CLT is intrinsically patriarchal it theoretically affords all women with the right to reside upon the land, and also to produce crops. Therefore, women are able to assert some level and degree of power and agency.

With regards to food insecurity/security, how women are influenced by food insecurity/security is also in some instances directly related to their position within the household, as well as to how the household is formed. Even if evidence has been presented that suggests that women are more prone to food insecurity than men, this is by no means conclusive; neither is the definition of what it means to be food secure.

With these issues in mind, the following chapter will discuss the epistemological approach that I employed whilst collecting empirical data and the methods that were used.

### The research journey: methods and challenges

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter has four main purposes. Firstly, it discusses the epistemological assumptions that were used to shape and guide this research. For this to be done, I have attempted to explore these social dynamics by drawing upon feminist philosophical traditions and by using a feminist ethnographic approach. Secondly, it introduces the research location, and explores my personal journey as a feminist researcher. Thirdly, the chapter discusses the specific research objectives and how I used multiple methods to conduct the research. Finally, it discusses how the data that I collected was analysed and interpreted through a gender awareness lens.

#### 3.2 Feminist Ethnography<sup>36</sup>

As feminist research is premised on a theory of gender, in this research I was influenced by feminist approaches to epistemology, most specifically feminist ethnography. Before discussing what feminist ethnography is, I will first give an overview of what ethnography is. Primarily, ethnography is not simply a methodology, but a philosophy of research (Anderson-Levitt, 2006), in this case an epistemology. The goal of an ethnographer, regardless of their theoretical background or academic perspective, is to, as noted by Green et al. (2012:309), “learn from the people, (the insiders) what counts as cultural knowledge (insider meaning).” Or, as proposed by Madden (2010: 6), “An

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<sup>36</sup> There are numerous debates about the level of immersion that is required when one approaches research from the perspective of an Ethnographic approach. Pure ethnography is often seen as being when a researcher spends extended periods of time in the field, or where they make repeat visits over a period of years. However, as noted by Madden (2010), it is no longer possible to do classic ethnographic studies where one would try to be fully emerged in the local context. Time and financial constraints have a part to play in this, as to do practicalities. I believe that one can take an ethnographic approach to research even if you are only in the research environment for a short time; it is how you present yourself that is of relevance. In my case, you do not get much deeper than someone who is married into the community and has its child.

ethnography is ultimately a story that is backed up by reliable qualitative data and the authority that comes from active ethnographic engagement.”

In relation to feminist research, the foundations of feminist research are based on a belief that the research that we conduct and produce should create knowledge that will make a difference to women’s lives. It occurs through social and individual change (Letherby, 2003), which is, I believe, imperative to and of great value for international development thinking. What makes feminist research distinguishable from other forms of research is that it is concerned with the positionality of the researcher, by the questions that will be asked and also by the intended purpose of the research. Letherby (2003:73) asserts “research from a feminist methodological standpoint should provide understandings of women’s experiences as they understand it, interpreted in the light of feminist conceptions of gender relations.”<sup>37</sup>

In relation to what is feminist ethnography, a concise definition is proposed by Craven and Davis (2013:1): “a project committed to documenting lived experience as it is impacted by gender, race, class, sexuality, and other aspects of participants’ lives.” They also assert “that among the many strands of feminism, there is support for linking ethnography to a commitment to engaging in research that is socially and politically relevant to those who we study” (2013: 9). This implies that feminist ethnographers are concerned with researching topics that are of relevance to those whose realities they profess to understand.

With specific relevance to my research, a feminist ethnography permitted me, as a researcher, to research the relevance of power relations and gender inequalities. This, owing to the nature of this research, is fundamental, since the structural inequalities between men and women in terms of land ownership and food insecurity, as discussed in the previous chapters, are clearly evident. By using a feminist ethnography I was able to, as asserted by Schrock (2013: 58), “produce knowledge about women’s lives in specific cultural contexts, recognise the potential detriments and benefits of representation, are interested in exploring women’s experiences of oppression along with the

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<sup>37</sup> I am aware that feminism is not a homogeneous concept.

agency women exercise in their own lives, and feel an ethical responsibility towards the communities in which they work.”

### **3.2.1 A product of truth**

A point that I would like to note is that my proposed research did not aim to provide a cause and effect conclusion. As proposed by Letherby (2003) feminist research provides us with another way of seeing the world. It does not intend to uncover the pure and uncontaminated truth. It does, however, aim to provide a truth that is relevant to the context in which the research was undertaken and is time-bound. The purpose of this research was not to provide a generalisable qualitative study. I also acknowledge that my interpretation of the phenomena studied is in itself a construction and that my values and beliefs as a researcher are assumed to exist (Robson, 2011:24). With this in mind, I will now discuss the methods that were employed in this research.

### **3.3. Methods**

My field research was primarily a case study conducted in the villages of Kom and Adunu. Both villages border each other and are a part of the Arum division of Agago district in northern Uganda.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Both of the villages were previously a part of Pader district. Agago became a district in its own right in 2010.

Figure Two. The Acholi and Lango regions of northern Uganda



The methods that were used to support the methodological framework are those that complement a feminist ethnography insofar as they enable women's experiences and voices to be distinct and discernible. The methods used in this research were: semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and observations (of which participant observations were a part of the observational process).<sup>39</sup> Both focus groups and observations were used to help support emerging data and theory and also to facilitate with my integration into the local context.<sup>40</sup> The justification for using a mixed methods approach, as proposed by McGee (2002), is that a mixed methods approach allows researchers to learn and see realities in different ways, and to link different types of data.<sup>41</sup> In specific relation to feminist research, as noted by Letherby (2003), a mixed methods approach helps researchers link the present with the

<sup>39</sup> I am aware that there are other methods that could have been used whilst I conducted this research. However, these are the methods that I believed were most conducive to the research process. I am also aware that the methods used are used by other academic disciplines and in conjunction with other methodologies, for example, grounded theory.

<sup>40</sup> This relates to participant observation and not focus groups.

<sup>41</sup> Denzin (1970) proposes that there are four distinct types of triangulation; the one that was of significance to this research was methodological triangulation. Methodological triangulation implies that more than one method of data collection is employed whilst conducting the research.



past, which, when wishing to enquire about a person's lived experience, is of importance.

Prior to discussing in depth how I used the methods that I employed throughout this research, I will now give an overview of why the villages of Adunu and Kom were chosen for this research.

### **3.4 Research location: Kom and Adunu, a long way from West Yorkshire.**

There are numerous reasons why I chose to conduct my research in the villages of Kom and Adunu rather than others in northern Uganda.

Firstly, the villages are in an area of the region that experienced numerous atrocities throughout the two decades long war and where large numbers of the population of the villages, if not all, were internally displaced. However, unlike other areas of the region where people were displaced for over ten years, those who were displaced, if they did reside in camps, were there from only 2002 until 2006. It is this information that counters the narrative that people lived in camps for decades and that generations were lost and born in the camps.<sup>42</sup> Secondly, this is an area of northern Uganda where both women and men rely heavily on subsistence farming and, or, the informal cash economy for their household food needs, and where seasonal hunger is a common occurrence.

Other than these factors, the villages are also in an area where employment opportunities outside of the home environment are limited, the reasons for this being, the remoteness of the area from the nearest business hubs and the lack of industrialisation in the area as a whole. It is also an area of the region that lacks access to key services, such as a health clinic. Not only this, but it is also an area where people closely associate themselves with their clans. Patriarchal ideologies within families are rigid and traditional practices and customs are expected to be respected and upheld, though as my data demonstrates women do have a certain level of agency and are able to

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<sup>42</sup> This is not to say that people living in other areas of the country were not in camps for long periods of time because they were. This was definitely the case in some areas in Gulu district (see Harris, 2012b).

negotiate, though they are not permitted to be involved in clan meetings as these are the domain of men. In relation to land tenure systems (LTS), patrilineal practices of land inheritance are the cultural and traditional norm, with the main LTS being customary and undifferentiated.

Most specifically, though, I have a personal connection to both villages. Kom is the traditional home of my husband and his family, although, owing to the war in northern Uganda, many of my husband's relatives, my in-laws included, are still living in other areas of the country.<sup>43</sup> As this was to be my first visit to Uganda on my own, and due to my going to do field work with our one year old daughter, Amelie, myself and my husband (who stayed in the UK), decided that it made sense for me to do my research in an area with which I was already familiar. As Creswell (2014) notes, it is imperative to have a solid understanding of the research location as one should be aware and be able to make sense of the environment where the research is being conducted. Also, for me it was an area where I anticipated that I would be readily accepted as a de facto member of the community owing to my affiliation through marriage.<sup>44</sup> I am also affiliated to a local research NGO who are based in the town where I stayed, this being Advocates for Research and Development (ARiD). It is through this affiliation that I anticipated that I would be able to access research participants, which, due to my non-demographical characteristics as a female, foreign and white is imperative.<sup>45</sup> Also, if I am honest, I was genuinely curious to see what life in the villages was like for women, especially due to my coming from a very different background. It is this which supports a feminist ethnography.

### **3.5. The researcher and her toddler**

As noted, this research journey was not a solo journey to the field, but a family one. It was a journey that included not only me, but also my one year old daughter, Amelie. Thus, not only did I have to contend with integrating myself

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<sup>43</sup> For reference my husband has not lived in the village for many years. That said, when I interviewed people over the age of 40, most of them remembered my husband from when he was growing up and his father is still also a very well respected member of the community as he is an elder.

<sup>44</sup> Even if in effect I am a de jure member due to marriage.

<sup>45</sup> My husband was in effect the principle gate keeper in this research.

into the local environment, but I also had to take care of my daughter. To say that it was an experience that had its highs and lows is, quite frankly, an understatement. It is a journey that saw us arrive to an unfinished house, an unqualified nanny, an empty market and experience malaria, frequent electrical blackouts and, at times, loneliness and strained relations with some of the male members of my husband's family. However, it was also, a perfect time for Amelie to be introduced to her roots, given her young age, and to experience life with her Acholi peers and cousins. She did this by playing with the local children, who lived in nearby grass thatched huts and permanent buildings.

When I returned from the field, I would often find her surrounded by a group of local children playing or chasing chickens in neighbours' compounds (see Appendix Four).

As Scheyvens and Nowak (2003) observe, there are both advantages and disadvantages to doing fieldwork with children, especially a toddler. Taking Amelie with me to the field is not a decision that I took lightly; after all northern Uganda is an area where malaria is high.<sup>46</sup> It is still an area that is scarred by war and where resources are limited. Also, owing to Amelie being mixed-*'race'*, I was not sure how the local community would react to her being *'different'*.<sup>47</sup>

If Amelie hadn't been with me, it is highly likely that I might have ploughed on with more work. That said, having Amelie with me also gave me the time to have a break and for me to reflect. Other than this, on a more professional and practical note, as a female researcher in some cultures, research participants (especially those who are female) may find it hard to comprehend that a fellow woman could leave her children at home. As a 37 year-old woman, it is to be expected that people would assume that I was a mother, especially in an environment where it is the social norm not only to marry and have children,

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<sup>46</sup> Northern Uganda has one of the highest prevalence of malaria in Uganda, with a prevalence rate of 90% (WHO, 2013).

<sup>47</sup> Owing to the large number of NGOs in the area people are used to seeing foreigners. However, they are not used to seeing children of foreigners or mixed raced children as foreigners usually live in either Kampala or the large tourist towns. During my time in Pader, Amelie and I were the only non-Ugandans residing in town.

but also to be married and have children from your teens.<sup>48</sup> Being in the field with children also shows the importance of family for researchers, (Cassell 1987) which in many cultures are qualities that people, especially women, admire. I can say with conviction that this was definitely the case for me whilst I was conducting my research.<sup>49</sup>

### **3.5.1 Where to live with a toddler**

Had I been on my own, it is highly likely that I would have stayed in one of the villages, especially the village of Kom, as this is where my husband and I have a small grass thatched house. Staying in the village, I believe, would have given me more of an opportunity to immerse myself into the local context and enhance the method of participant observation. However, owing to Amelie's needs (and if I'm entirely honest also mine) it was not possible for us to reside in either of the villages where I conducted my work, the reasons being that the villages are both in extremely remote and rural areas of the district. They both lack basic facilities, most notably electricity, running water, markets, and childcare and health facilities. There was also the issue of our safety to take into consideration. It is highly unlikely that we would have come to any harm had we resided in the village.<sup>50</sup> However, it was not a risk that I was prepared to take with a small child. Owing to this, both Amelie and I stayed in a town called Pader.

Pader is the name of one of the districts in northern Uganda and Pader town is where the district headquarters are located. There is also a police station, a magistrates, a health centre (that is often without healthcare workers), a market, which on a good day would supply us with avocados and (if we were really lucky) pineapples, running water and an erratic electricity supply (see

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<sup>48</sup> On more than one occasion I found myself having to explain and justify in detail why my other daughter had remained at home. Since it is common for children of divorced or separated parents to reside with the father, I found this strange.

<sup>49</sup> As women got to know me I was often asked when I would be bringing Amelie to the villages. I did so on several occasions. She was never present when I did interviews as I find it difficult to concentrate with her running around.

<sup>50</sup> During our time in Pader there was one occasion when someone tried to break into one of the offices that form part of the compound where we were living. Fortunately they did not manage to get in as they were disturbed. Upon returning to the UK I was informed that it was possible that they were trying to steal a motorbike that was kept in the office. By no means were Amelie and I in danger.

Appendix Five for some photos of the village and the town). It is also the place where my husband decided to build a house and where ARiD and numerous other NGOs are based.<sup>51</sup> Pader is a 45 minute motorbike ride away from the villages. Some days it took my research assistant and I considerably longer, especially if it had rained, as the roads were nearly impassable.

### **3.5.2 Health issues**

In relation to my taking Amelie to Uganda, what challenged me the most were issues that were related not only to her health, but also to my own (followed closely by a family of rats who were intent on living in my house, along with the odd cockroach). During our time in Uganda both Amelie and I contracted malaria. It was Amelie who contracted it first and it is an experience that frightened me greatly as, not only were we a two hour drive from the nearest well-respected and equipped hospital, but also I feared for her safety and health. Needless to say Amelie did not die; in fact she bounced back from the illness within the space of a week. However, it was a difficult week and of course it was a week where my ability to do any work was limited.

When I caught malaria, unlike Amelie, I struggled over the course of a few weeks, because not only was the strain of malaria that I had more severe than Amelie's, but also my body did not react to the first course of treatment that I was given.<sup>52</sup> After the end of the first bout of malaria I was left weak and I had lost a considerable amount of weight. However, as soon as I was feeling better, though not fully recovered, I did restart fieldwork. Had I had longer in the field I would have waited until I was fully recovered as during the remaining time that I had in Uganda, (roughly six weeks) I did suffer quite a lot with my health. I also contracted malaria again, though this time it was less severe.

This situation may sound quite depressing and at the time it was. However, owing to the way in which the research was conducted, even if I was unwell, I

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<sup>51</sup> It is this house that was not ready when Amelie and I arrived. This meant that I spent my first week in the field managing the finishing of the building project. At this time I was also looking after my husband's other children. ARiD is a research organisation that my husband oversees and is based in one of the offices in our compound. It is here where I would transcribe my interviews.

<sup>52</sup> Even though I had malaria, I did manage to attend a Northern Uganda Land Platform meeting in a town called Lira, which is a 90 minute bike ride from Pader. It is fortunate that I did, as it was here that I interviewed several key informants.

was still in a position to analyse data as this is something that I did from my office and not in the village, and it did not require me to travel. When I felt better, and new theories had emerged, I went back into the field, so in a way a positive came out of a negative.

### **3.6. Research Assistant, the pros and cons**

For the research to be conducted I needed to employ a research assistant.<sup>53</sup> Ideally I would have liked to have had a female translator who would also have acted as my research assistant as there is the possibility that when women are asked certain questions of a personal nature by a man, their answer to the question may be influenced by the power relations of the local context (Oakley, 1981).<sup>54</sup> However, when I asked members of ARiD to assist me with identifying a female research assistant they were very clear that I would struggle to find a woman from the local context who had a degree or who spoke English to a high standard.<sup>55</sup>

My dilemma was that not only did I need a research assistant who spoke a high level of English, but I also needed someone who was local to the villages of Adunu and Kom and, (due to the distance between the villages and Pader town) I also needed someone who would be able to take me to the villages on a daily basis. As women do not generally drive motor bikes, once again it made practical sense to find a male research assistant. In the end, after much communication with ARiD and through discussions with my husband, it was decided that it made sense to ask a member of the extended family if they would be able to assist me during the time that I was in Uganda. Mike is

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<sup>53</sup> I secured the services of my research assistant prior to leaving for Uganda. I did this as I wanted to be prepared to commence work as soon as I arrived and also I wanted to discuss the research with Mike and to inform Mike what I expected from him during the research process.

<sup>54</sup> In several cases this proved to be unfounded as women were very open about their subordinate position. This is discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

<sup>55</sup> There were several justifications given for this, one being that when there is money to spare for education more often than not that money is likely to be used to fund boys through school and not girls, and also, even if girls do have the opportunity to attend school, it is very common in the village for women to get pregnant in their mid/ late teens, thus they are forced to drop out of school.

educated to degree level and is bilingual. I had also met him on several previous occasions when I had visited Uganda and knew that we would be able to work well with each other. I also knew he would be reliable. On a practical level his local knowledge was invaluable, as too was his ability to facilitate me in gaining the trust of the local community and his ability to access potential research participants, which, as noted by Ellen (1984) is of high importance in development fieldwork. Also, due to my limited command of the vernacular, Mike proved invaluable as a translator, though there were compromises made on my part, especially in the beginning. As Mike is not a trained translator, sometimes it became clear to me that Mike was not translating in the literal sense, but interpreting the interview discourse. I became aware of this when some of the answers to the questions that I posed kept repeating themselves and also on occasions a respondent would give a long answer, which, once interpreted to me the answer was dramatically shorter. Evidently this is an issue that I had to address as personally I wanted the interviews to be translated literally as much as possible word for word. This is something that we discussed at length and eventually it was resolved. I did, however, have to discard some of the interviews as the responses that I was given lacked substance.

Even if, as noted, I would ideally have liked to have worked with a female research assistant, as I am inclined to agree with those such as Oakely. I do think that, owing to the patriarchal nature of the society in the village, having a male research assistant counterbalanced me being a female researcher. Due to men being more respected, working with a man in the local context is more conducive and appropriate as female research assistants may not be respected as much as their male peers. In reality Mike was more than a translator; he was a vital part of the field research process.

### **3.7 Thematic Guide**

Prior to leaving the UK at the end of December 2013, from the literature presented in both Chapters Two and Three of this thesis I was able to develop pre-determined themes. It is these themes that were the foundations of this

research and what influenced all of the methods that were used throughout this research.<sup>56</sup> The principle question for this thesis was,

*“How do gender relations influence land access for women and household food security in the post-conflict villages of Adunu and Kom in northern Uganda?”*

The sub questions and thematic areas that pertain to the principle question were:

- ∂ How are gender relations manifested and supported?
- ∂ How does one access land in the local context and what influences this?
- ∂ What do women have to do so that they can continue to access land?
- ∂ What is food security and how does someone become food secure?
- ∂ What influences individual and household food security?
- ∂ Are women more prone to food insecurity than men?

For the principal questions to be answered, I needed to access research participants. As I have noted, it was primarily Mike’s job to identify and contact possible research participants. He did this by using purposive non-random sampling (Robson, 2011; Corbin & Stauss, 2008).

### **3.8 Sampling**

Even if the focus of this research was on women, both women and men were interviewed, observed and partook in focus groups, the justification for this being that, owing to the social dynamics within the village, it was important to gauge the opinions of both men and women. Also, as gender does not simply refer to women, it was important for me that I also interviewed and observed men. As Letherby (2003) asserts, it is not possible to understand the lives of women without having an understanding of the realities of men. Also, as noted (Letherby, 2003: 137), “it is necessary to consider when the gender order works against men and when men’s and women’s lives intersect.” Moreover,

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<sup>56</sup> For reference the research was undertaken between the end of December 2013 and Mid April 2014. I chose to conduct the research during this time as it is commonly a quiet time in the villages as it is the dry season and farming activity is minimal.



women cannot always be reliable biographers of men. And neither can men be reliable biographers for women, as the data chapters illustrate, (most specifically Chapter Six).

On a practical note, a justification for interviewing men was that on numerous occasions those who could give me the information that I needed were men. The reason why they could give me the information that I needed was due to the power that they hold within the communities. After all, the heads of families are men, as too are the chiefs.

In relation to women in the villages, this method of sampling was employed owing to the clearly defined categories of women that are evident in Chapters Two and Three, these being married women, widows and single women.<sup>57</sup> Thus I was very specific when asking Mike to identify possible research participants from the villages. Owing to his local knowledge, this was always possible. On the odd occasion that it was not, we would ask someone and they would direct us to an appropriate person. All of the women that I interviewed were very accommodating and welcoming and were more than willing to give me some of their time without hesitation. Table Four shows the numbers of research participants, and the category of the individual from the villages of Kom and Adunu. Only one of the research participants is classified as being a commercial farmer.

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<sup>57</sup> As noted, single women refers to women who have either never married or who have married and their relationship has broken down, and also to women who have lived with a man, but never been officially married. In the case of the villages, bridewealth has not been paid.

Categories of research participant	Number of participants
Married women who live with husband	14
Married women whose husbands live outside of the family home for most of the year	3
Widowed women	5
Divorced women	1
Separated from husband	5
Never traditionally married <sup>58</sup>	4
Married men whose wives also reside with them	12

Table Four. Category of research participants in the villages and their numbers.

In relation to approaching men, when Mike and I approached men to interview, on numerous occasions even if men did agree to be interviewed, they wanted it to be on their terms insofar as I needed to make an appointment with them. Simply turning up and expecting to be able to talk to them was not readily accepted. Not all of the men who I interviewed took this stance; many were willing to give me their time as soon as I asked them if they would consent to an interview. Nonetheless, there were evident power relations at play with some of the men that I interviewed, which, in a patriarchal society, was to be expected.

As I had chosen to interview single women, ideally I would have liked to have been in the position to interview men who also live on their own. However, when I asked if this would be possible I was informed that in the villages the only men that live on their own are those who are very elderly.<sup>59</sup> (Men who do live on their own, are those who are waiting to be married and are classified as being youths). I would have liked to have interviewed this category of men

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<sup>58</sup> This group of women are women who have lived with the father of at least one of their children, though bridewealth was never paid for the women, thus in the local context they were never married. Also the children belong to the clan of the mother and not the father. For reference, all of the women in this category are under the age of 30 and all of them indicated in their interviews that they had experienced some form of physical abuse.

<sup>59</sup> From my observations and from talking to Mike and other people in the localities, it would appear that all of the men in the village, especially those who are no longer living with their parents, are either married or living with a partner. During my time in the village I never came across a house that was headed by a man without a women also residing with them.

about their opinions of patriarchy and how the Acholi culture has evolved over their lifetimes. However, when I did approach several of these men and asked if they were available for an interview, they all declined. The justification given was that they felt that the married youth were the people to talk to.

In relation to the interviews that were conducted with research participants who do not reside in the village, but who reside/work in the district of Agago or Pader, the method employed was also that of purposive non-random sampling. However, on these occasions it was not Mike who helped identify these people, but members of the local community in Pader, who are classified in local terms as being elites owing to the positions that they hold in local government and within the regional NGO sector. In effect these men could be classified as being gatekeepers. It was both Ben and George who facilitated me with being able to interview local elites. Table Five, shows the role of the person and gender who I interviewed in the Agago and Pader district who do not reside in the village.

Category of individual	Gender	Position and or Organisation and locality
Civil servant	Male	District land officer Pader
Civil servant	Male	Sub county chief Adunu
Civil servant	Female	Position Gender communication and development officer Agaoa
Civil servant	Male	District magistrate Pader
Civil servant	Male	District agricultural officer Pader
Traditional leader	Male	District chief Pader
Traditional leader	Male	Head of the Paligno clan
Former civil servant	Male	LC5 Pader
NGO representative	Male	Ugandan Land Alliance, regional Pader
NGO representative	Male	WORDUET Pader
NGO representative	Female	LEMU Lira
Former civil servant	Male	Elite Farmer Arum <sup>60</sup>

Table Five. Elite interviews, role and gender of interviewees.

<sup>60</sup> The land that was used to house refugees at Arum refugee camp was the land that belonged to this elite farmer, and when the war ended his land was returned to him.

With regard to interviews that were conducted with members from national NGOs, as I had already visited Pader in 2011 and in early 2013, I had already established contact with several of these NGOs. Due to this, it was I who approached them again in 2014, asking if it would be possible to interview them. The method of sampling employed here was also purposive and non-random as those who I interviewed were individuals who work for NGOs that specifically work in the areas of land rights and issues that pertain to women. Other than those NGOs that are in Pader, but which have national offices, I was also fortunate enough to interview Judy Adoko, a key gender and land activist from The Land and Equity Movement of Uganda (LEMU). This interview was made possible as I travelled to a land conference in the town of Lira.<sup>61</sup> It was through mutual friends that we were introduced. At the conference I also had informal discussions (which were not recorded) with representatives from the following NGOs: Trocaire, Action Aid, the Refugee Law project and several others.

In total I conducted 56 interviews, 12 of which were key informant interviews and the remaining 44 with people from the villages.

As will be noted, there is a distinct contrast in the numbers of people that I interviewed who are local leaders, civil servants, and representatives of NGOs to the numbers of people whom I interviewed in the village. The justification for this is that, owing to the case study being a micro case study, I was more concerned with the perceptions of those in the village than with those of the people who do not live the realities of those who reside in the village. I wanted people's opinions of their own realities.

### **3.9 Ethical concerns, confidentiality and perceptions.**

As this research was undertaken as a student of the UoB the ethical standards that we, as students, are expected to uphold were adhered to. However, owing to the nature of the environment where I conducted my research on numerous occasions research participants were not asked if they wanted to participate

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<sup>61</sup> Lira is in the Langi region of northern Uganda, South of the Acholi region.

in the research in advance, as when I arranged interviews in advance more often than not the prospective research participant was no longer available or I was kept waiting for up to five hours. Thus, when I got someone at home, I asked them if I could interview them. This method is common practice in development research (Leslie & Storey, 2003) and also in anthropological studies (De Lanine, 2000).

In relation to consent, all of those who participated in the research, be they people in the villages or outside of the villages, were asked to give their consent verbally. In relation to verbal consent, I chose verbal over written consent; owing to the low levels of literacy in the village - asking a participant to read an ethical consent form was neither practical nor appropriate. Also for me, agreeing to be interviewed was also seen as a means of consent as prior to an interview beginning all of those whom I interviewed were given an overview of the context of the research. It was after this overview that they were asked if they would like to partake in the research or not. Other than elderly men not wanting to be interviewed only one other prospective research participant declined, this being an elderly divorced woman who stated that she did not want to talk to a foreign white woman.

With regard to a participant's identify, all participants were asked their names at the beginning of the interview process. This was done more so for my records than for the research itself. All participants were though, informed of their ethical rights to anonymity and informed that if I were to use anything that they said within my thesis that I would refer to them under a pseudonym. That said, several elite interviewees were happy to have their name included within this thesis, hence why I use their actual names.

Other than informing research participants of the UoB ethical guidelines and their right to anonymity, and providing them with an overview of the research, I also, at the beginning of interviews, made it clear that I was in the village for the purpose of doing research and only that, and that there would be no financial gain for those who participated in the research. I decided to do this as I did not want anyone to think that I was there to initiate some kind of charity project as is often the case when white foreigners visit the area. As a point of

reference even if I did this, this did not stop several people, (mainly men who spoke good English) asking me to sponsor their children through school or asking me when my husband and I would be returning to the village to set up a school or open up a health clinic. Being asked these things did make me question my position within the village and how I am viewed as an outsider. However, as observed by Madden (2010), proper ethnographic reflexivity requires that we must not forget that we will always maintain some sense of the outsider, despite the fact that we may be or may become very familiar with the people we choose to study.

With regards to ethical issues that specifically pertain to women, during some of the interviews that I conducted with women, especially single women, the issue of domestic violence was voiced. As the purpose of this research was not to enquire about domestic violence, this is something that I had to deal with very sensitively. If a respondent wanted to discuss the violence that they had experienced I listened to them, however, I did not probe them for more information. Also, when it was clear that some women were experiencing distress, I quickly changed the direction of the interview. The issue of domestic violence arose very early in the interview process, as when I asked women why they had returned to the land of the father, some respondents would explain that they had done so due to domestic violence. This is an issue that I will refer to in Chapter Seven.

### **3.9.1 My positionality as a feminist researcher**

In relation to my positionality as a feminist researcher, the strengths of being a feminist researcher when approaching a study from the perspective of a gender awareness approach are many. Primarily, feminist research supports that as researchers it is neither practical nor possible to be detached from the research participant, especially if the participant is female. And that when conducting research one cannot separate reason from emotion; disengagement is, in effect, counterproductive (May, 2001). Of course as a researcher one needs to have a certain level of objectivity as being over involved may prevent a researcher from conducting quality research.

However, I would argue that it is the emotional engagement with a research participant that can guide, for example an interview, be this formal or informal.

Not only is disengagement from the participant seen as being counterproductive, but if as feminist researchers we remain detached, we would also be supporting and reinforcing the masculine/patriarchal paradigm of research (Oakley, 1990).

As a female researcher throughout the course of the research process, especially when I was interviewing women, in many cases it was not possible to remain detached as inevitably I am a woman. Even if I am a woman from the global North, I am still in effect a woman who, owing to the social construction of gender, is oppressed by patriarchal ideologies that prevail in society. When you find yourself interviewing the female representative for the Twero clan at the local village level and listen to her explain how the continuation of the subordination of women is accepted owing to the social norms of the clan (see Chapter Five), inevitably this has an effect. Of course I conducted the interview in a professional manner. However, one cannot help forming an opinion or an attachment. Also I found myself on more than one occasion informing women who I had interviewed that, if they needed any help with regards to remaining on their lands, that they could contact the Ugandan Land Alliance in Pader. There are those who would clearly argue that it was not my place to do so. However, as a woman it felt like my duty and obligation and also, unlike in other types of research, the principal objectives of development research are to inform the research participant of the 'alternatives to existing social arrangements' (Corbridge, 1998:42).

### **3.10. The interview process**

Prior to discussing the interview process, I feel that it is important to emphasise how relevant interviews are when conducting a feminist ethnography. Narratives are "a method that enables the discovering of the social experience of silenced women...(and they)... provide a means of evaluating the present, re-evaluating the past and anticipating the future" (Letherby, 2003:89).

All of the interviews that were conducted in the villages, be these with women or with men, were conducted either inside people's homes or in their

compounds, within the compounds of people who were not respondents or near a local bore hole where women and children go to collect water. Upon arrival at the homes of research participants, even though socially women are not offered chairs as they are expected to sit on mats, I was often offered a chair. On several occasions if respondents did not have a chair they would send one of their children to a neighbour's house to fetch a chair for me. On other occasions the only seating available was tree trunks or the mantels that form part of the houses. I was rarely expected to sit on the floor, and when I was it was because there were no other alternatives available. On one occasion the women who I was interviewing did not even have a reed mat, so I was offered a plastic sheet to sit on. I was often surrounded by chickens and by children who appeared to crave the attention of their mothers. What is clear from the way in which I was treated was that there were clear power dynamics at play.<sup>62</sup>

When I conducted interviews in the villages, prior to commencing the interview each participant was given an overview of the themes that I would be asking them questions about and informed verbal consent was sought. Before commencing the interview I always started with giving an overview of myself: my name, where I am from and, if the interview was being conducted with women, that I was a mother. I also informed the research participants that I was married to a member of the Twero clan. Those people who I interviewed who lived closest to the ancestral lands of my husband and other members of his clan were generally very keen to talk to me about my husband. They often asked me when my husband and I were going to move back. There are several reasons why I chose to share information about myself. Firstly, northern Uganda is an area of the country that is experiencing research fatigue. Since the end of the war, owing to the influx of NGOs, a very large amount of research has been conducted in the area. I was warned about this, not only by ARiD, but also by the Pader NGO forum. It was important for me to get across that I was not yet another researcher from an NGO, but a student and

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<sup>62</sup> See Scheyvens and Storey (2003) for a comprehensive overview of power dynamics in development research.



a student who has strong ties to the local community. When people realised that by talking to me it would help facilitate my studies they were very willing to talk to me. It was almost like there was a sense of pride amongst some people, especially those from my husband's clan. In relation to informing women that I am a mother, as I am more than aware of the perceived power dynamics between foreign white women and local women, I really wanted to show a more human side to me. As I have already noted, being able to connect with the people that you are researching is an important component of feminist ethnographic research. Yes I am white, (though not a 'typical' middle class PhD researcher, as I was brought up in a socially-deprived area in the North East of England and have experienced poverty, albeit in the context of the global North). I am also from the global North and I am in a fortunate position where I am educated and I do not have to rely on the land for my wellbeing. However, at the end of the day, I am a woman. And a woman who was more than anything grateful that people would take time out their busy lives to talk to me. Having a level of reciprocity seemed like the natural solution, and it is also something that is expected of a feminist ethnographer. Being an insider, yet an outsider, gave the research an interesting dynamic.<sup>63</sup>

After introducing myself, the beginning of interviews were standardised. I chose this as I felt that it was important to ascertain key information about the participants. I was particularly concerned with knowing their marital status, if they had children, where they lived, (for example the land of their father or, in the case of married and widowed women, their husband's land). I asked if they had spent any time in IDP camps, if they were subsistence farmers and also if they were involved in the informal or formal cash economy. The interviews generally lasted between 30 minutes to, at times, up to 90 minutes. Those interviews that were the shortest were the interviews that were conducted with women. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, I was aware of the time constraints that women face due to the amount of work they have to do and often it was due to the responses that I got from the interviews.<sup>64</sup> Those women

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<sup>63</sup> Mike, as well as others, is adamant that no other researcher would be afforded the same level of access as I was.

<sup>64</sup> The reason I say that I am aware of the amount of work that women have to do not only comes from academic literature, but also from my personal observations whilst in the field

who appeared to be on initial impression disempowered, (these being predominantly single young women with children) were the women who struggled the most with the interview process. It was also these women who gave the shortest responses to the questions that were posed. This may not be simply coincidental, as noted by Kessin (1985:37),

“Reflexive autobiography is possible only when subjects believe that their own lives are important enough to deserve recounting, and when social support is provided... If people’s dominant ideologies, expressions of male political hegemony, define what women know and do as secondary and unimportant, then creating a context where women can and will talk about themselves.... may indeed be difficult.”

Also as proposed by Momsen (2006), women in male dominated cultures are not used to being asked their opinions. It is also likely that they are also not used to speaking so openly in front of men (in this case my male research assistant).

In relation as to how men may approach interviews, especially those that are conducted by a woman, men may feel threatened in a one to one situation and may fear how control and power are fostered throughout the conversation (Schwalbe, 2002). This is something that I found to be true when I went to interview Rwot Levi.<sup>65</sup> It was agreed in advance through the head of my clan that I would interview Rwot Levi on an individual basis. When I turned up to interview him he had decided that a one to one interview was no longer appropriate and that his advisers needed to be present. In the end the ‘interview’ turned into an impromptu focus group between me and 22 men. In relation to interviewing men, when certain subjects were approached, (thematic areas that could be construed as challenging their masculinity), I observed a noticeable shift in the manner in which the responses were given.

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collecting data and also from the activity that was evident in my compound. For reference, several members of my husband’s family live in buildings that are in our compound. I never once, not even on a weekend, witnessed any of the male members of the family doing any domestic work.

<sup>65</sup>Rwot is the Acholi word for chief.

In some cases gendered relations became dramatized.<sup>66</sup> A shift in the manner of response was also relevant to some women, especially women who were divorced or single. It was these shifts in the response and often the body language that indicated that they were uncomfortable with discussing certain issues that had arisen throughout the interview, most notably the subject of domestic violence, particularly in front of a man. As the underlying premise of this research was not to acquire a full understanding of domestic violence towards women in the given research area, this subject matter was bypassed as it did not feel appropriate. It is, however, an issue that I acknowledge as being present in the community and it is (as I will discuss in the data chapters of this thesis) a reality for some women in the villages.

### **3.10.1 Key informant interviews**

In relation to the interviews that were conducted with active civil servants, all of the interviews took place in their offices in various areas of the Agaog and Pader district. All of these interviews were prearranged, though this did take some organising and on several occasions I arrived at people's offices only to be told that they were not there. Through the course of interviewing several of the civil servants, it became apparent that they were clearly more concerned with recounting the rhetoric of the government and NGOs rather than giving me their personal opinion, which is, of course, normal, as I was interviewing them because of their positions within local government. It is highly likely that they were displaying their official position. It was also these individuals who wanted to control the focus and direction of the interview. Working for the government is something that is seen as giving one a certain level of power and authority. It is also these individuals who were very specific as to the amount of time that I could have to interview them. This could be due to wanting to appear to be active and busy on behalf of the community, though

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<sup>66</sup> This could also be attributed to the simple practical fact that they were being interviewed by a white Western educated woman; affiliation through marriage only takes a person so far.

from my observations and through general discourse outside of an interview context I know this not to be entirely true.<sup>67</sup>

Interviews with representatives of NGOs lasted one hour and were conducted in their offices. As noted previously, Judy Adoko was interviewed whilst I was attending a land conference.<sup>68</sup> Interviews that were conducted with former civil servants and traditional leaders took place either in their homes or in their compounds. These interviews were 90 minutes long. As with the interviews that were conducted with people from the village, I informed all of the key informants that I was married to a member from the local community. This is something that was welcomed by not only the traditional leaders but also by the former civil servants.

### **3.10.2 Observations**

Observations and participant observations were relevant to this research as they allowed me to gauge what people do rather than only what they say, thus it complemented the method of interviewing. It is a method that is, as noted by Spradley (1980), conducive to ethnographic research. Observing people working in their gardens, the weekly interactions at the local market and other social settings were valuable sources of rich data. Going to the market, (this being a market that is six miles away from the village) was invaluable as it allowed me to see first-hand what food stuffs were sold at the market and, more importantly, by whom. It also allowed me to see and confirm gendered divisions of socialisation. Most importantly though, simply riding around the village through the course of the research was informative, especially as the dry season went into the rainy season, as this allowed me to see how people prepared their gardens and who was ready for the next farming season. Observing local life also supported a lot of the literature that concludes that there are evident divisions of labour and clearly defined social roles. When I interviewed people I also made a note of what their compounds were like and

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<sup>67</sup> For reference it is also these individuals who intend to run for political office in the forthcoming 2016 elections in Uganda. As I have a house in the constituency I was asked if I would give them support when their campaign begins.

<sup>68</sup> It was during this time that I had my first bout of malaria.

observed their physical surroundings. On one occasion, because I had to wait five hours to interview a key informant, I was able to observe how family disputes were dealt with and resolved as the man who I was to interview was presiding over a family meeting. As is the case traditionally, all of the men were sat on chairs and the women on the floor. I was, as had become the norm, offered a chair. I was expected to introduce myself to the group, (this being a group that consisted of around 20 people) and in turn be first introduced to the male members, all of whom spoke English, then to the wives who spoke in English, then to the other women, some of whom did not speak English. Here I was able to observe a clear and well defined hierarchy.

In relation to participant observation, I was by no means fully immersed as this was not possible for reasons that I have already alluded to.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, as noted by Oakley and Callaway (1992), for one to partake in participant observation one does not necessarily have to completely engage with the environment; participant observation can be maintained by a superficial relationship. That said, I did on several occasions help a local community fish project prepare a new pond for fish and also committed the social taboo of ploughing a field with oxen (see Appendix Five for this and fish pond photo).<sup>70</sup> Ploughing the fields is socially and traditionally the work of men; if a woman is to assist with the ploughing of a garden it will only be to guide the oxen, not to physically hold the plough. I was also invited to help grind sim-sim, collect water from the local borehole and partake in preparing food, all of these being activities that are exclusively, where possible, conducted by women or children.<sup>71</sup>

Observations were documented in a research journal. A journal, as noted by McGee (2002) and Corbin and Strauss (1998), is a valuable tool when reflecting on one's observations, as it helps with charting one's own

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<sup>69</sup> I was not fully emerged insofar as I did not reside in the villages. I did though, I believe, emerge myself as much as was possible given that I was with Amelie.

<sup>70</sup> This is something that I will refer back to in the following data chapters.

<sup>71</sup> Until those watching me realised that I wasn't useless, I was stared at and laughed at. There is a perception that whites are not able to do hard work and that we are only good at telling the locals what to do. People were also surprised that I travelled around the villages on a bike rather than a 4x4.

experience in the field. My research journal was also a tool that indicated to me through my writings if I had any biases and or prejudices. It was also used to begin thematic coding.<sup>72</sup>

### **3.10.3 Focus groups**

During the course of my stay, I conducted three formal focus groups and (as noted) one informal focus group, this being the interview that I was scheduled to have with the Rwot that turned into an impromptu focus group. With regards to the formal, pre-arranged focus groups, the sampling method used was also purposive and non-random, which, as noted by Barbour (2007), is a common method.<sup>73</sup> This time though, instead of the focus being on the marital status of the individual, I specifically wanted to conduct focus groups that were gender specific. The three focus groups that were conducted in the village were all composed of 10 individuals. They all lasted approximately one hour and were all pre-arranged. As the focus groups were organised on the basis of gender, one included only women, one was only male and the third had an equal representation of both men and women. The female-only focus group was conducted next to the local borehole in Kom, following a Micro-credit savings meeting. The male-only one, near to a public house as this is where large numbers of men congregate. The mixed group was conducted after a general meeting that was held close to Adunu primary school. The principal aim of all of the focus groups was to obtain a more solid understanding as to what food security and food insecurity means for those who reside in the village and how or if it had changed since the beginning of the LRA war to the present day. I chose to use focus groups for this line of enquiry as this was a theme within the research that was not really coming through the interviews that were conducted within the village.

In relation to how the focus groups were conducted, other than having an open discussion to discuss the above mentioned themes, I also used several

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<sup>72</sup> I made notes and annotations in the diary, if not every day, every couple of days.

<sup>73</sup> For a detailed discussion on Focus groups, please see Rosaline Barbour's (2007) book, *Doing Focus Group Research*.

participatory learning and action techniques.<sup>74</sup> These included flash cards, crops and a seasonal calendar (see Appendix Seven). There were several advantages and disadvantages to this method. In all of the groups there were several people who were more outspoken than the other members of the group. However, with some patience on my side, by the time the focus groups were finished all participants had given their opinions and joined in. Owing to the issue of language the process was at times slow, and Mike had a greater responsibility over the process due to this. Having visual images helped the process, and I would say that, in general, it was an experience that people enjoyed. It also meant that I had to relinquish some control over the research process. That said, I do acknowledge that the data from the focus groups may actually be limited to providing an insight into a collective, as the views that were expressed from those who partook in the groups may differ from those that are held in private.

In relation to the focus group with Rwot Levi, this focused on women's access to land and traditional practices of inheritance. Some of the men were very vocal, whereas others were not. As I will discuss in Chapter Five, this was a very informative meeting.

### **3.11 Analysis of data and returning home <sup>75</sup>**

Data analysis, as I have already alluded, was a continuous process that began as soon as I arrived in the local area. It was an analysis that was influenced by theories, as proposed in Chapter Two. It is through the continuous analysis of data whilst I was in the field that different lines of enquiry emerged. The main process of data analysis however, began when I went back home to the UK.

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<sup>74</sup>The usage of PLA techniques is commonplace in the development discourse, as discussed and used by Chambers (2007) with influence from Paulo Freire (1970) and Augusto Boal.

<sup>75</sup> I returned home in April 2014. The analysis of the data that I collected started in autumn 2014. Whilst I was conducting the analysis of the data, my husband and I separated. Since we separated my research assistant and other male members of my husband's family who may have been in a position to help me with follow up information have refused to help. Clearly, by leaving my husband (as I will discuss in Chapter Seven) I have been disassociated from the Twero clan. I have first-hand knowledge of what it means when a marriage ends and the consequences that it can bring to women who are married to someone from the village of Kom.

Following my return to the UK in mid-April, 2014, owing to my health problems, I made a conscious decision to take some time out of the data analysis process as I needed to recuperate.<sup>76</sup> Not only did I take time out of the data analysis process for health reasons, I also wanted time to reflect on my time in Uganda and to reflect on my experiences whilst in the field.<sup>77</sup> This reflection was done through a gender awareness lens and is conducive to ethnographic research.

When I began the analysis of the data that I obtained in the field, it became apparent to me that the richest source of data was from the interviews that I conducted, be these interviews that were conducted with women or men. As Letherby (2003) proposes, for feminists the narrative of women can be extremely important. It is due to this that the following data chapters are primarily focused on narrative accounts and not from observations that I made whilst conducting the research, nor the focus groups that I conducted.

For the narratives to be analysed I used pre-determined themes that were related to the principal research questions and also inductive analysis as it became apparent whilst reading through the interview transcripts that numerous themes had emerged. I also used the pre-determined categories that had been allocated to women to facilitate me with writing the data chapters. I did this as I believe that all of the categories of women whom I interviewed, be these married women, widows or single women, have their own stories to tell and their own experiences to recount.

### **3.12 Conclusion**

During this chapter I have discussed what a feminist ethnography is and justified why I, as a feminist researcher, chose to use this methodology and have explained its relevance to this research. I have also asserted that the purpose of this research was not to produce a generalisable qualitative study,

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<sup>76</sup> I had actually underestimated how ill I was. Not only was it the malaria that caused me to lose so much weight, but it was also the restricted diet that I had and also pre-existing health problems.

<sup>77</sup> Not only was I fortunate enough to learn a great deal from those who I was privileged to work with, but I also learnt a lot about myself. It is an experience that will remain in my thoughts for many years to come.



but to provide an indication of the truth that was time bound. It is a truth that is open to interpretation.

The chapter then gave a brief overview of the methods that were employed in this research and the justification for using them. The research location was introduced and it was here that I discussed why the villages of Adunu and Kom were specifically chosen over others in the Acholi Sub-region. It is also here where I introduced my unique position as a white foreigner married to a local man from Kom, and discussed what it was like conducting fieldwork with a toddler.

I then discussed the challenges of acquiring the services of a research assistant and how the options to me were limited. These limitations were evident, owing to the social construction of gender relations in the local area.

The research question and thematic guide were introduced, as too was how I conducted the research and how prospective research participants were identified. The chapter then discussed in detail my positionality as a feminist researcher and how this influenced the methods that were used to conduct this research and my reflexivity.

Finally this chapter has explained how I analysed the data that was generated in the field, be this whilst I was in Uganda or when I returned home to the UK.

### **The Ugandan state: war, land, gender relations, food security and the Acholi**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to give an overview of the following: a historical summary of Uganda and the Acholi and the legacy of war. Key legislative moments that pertain to land from pre-colonial times to present day are discussed, as too are how women have been influenced, by modern day land legislations. The Ugandan Constitution is discussed, most specifically its limitations and contradictions, as too is the social position of Ugandan women.

As the thesis is concerned with how women access and maintain access to land, empirical evidence is presented from a number of studies. These outline the problems and constraints that women encounter when wishing to access and or own land. Women's role in agriculture is addressed and present day food insecurity is discussed. Finally the chapter provides an overview of the role of Acholi women within rural Acholi society and demonstrates how they access land, the role that they play within the institution of the family and the importance of marital status are also discussed.

#### **4.2 Uganda and the Acholi, a selective historical overview**

Uganda is a land-locked, poor, agrarian country in East Africa, and, like other countries in the region, it was colonised by the British.<sup>78</sup> Upon the creation of Uganda, numerous tribes and clans with various cultural traditions and languages found themselves united as Ugandans. There are 56 tribes and 9 indigenous communities recognised by the amended 2005 Ugandan constitution, of which the Luo-speaking Acholi of the sparsely populated North are one.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> In the north of Uganda, the majority of both men and women derive their livelihoods from agriculture owing to limited opportunities to diversify. Up to 95% of people residing in the North are engaged in agriculture (WFP, 2013).

<sup>79</sup> Republic of Uganda, *1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda*, amended in 2005.

The Acholi are an ethnic group whose origins can be traced back as far as 1675 (Atkinson, 2010). They form part of the cattle breeding Luo-speaking group in East Africa and what is now referred to as Southern Sudan. Prior to the seventeenth century they were nomadic. However, as they began to settle in what is now known as northern Uganda they developed a socio-political order that was centralised around chiefdoms, chiefdoms that were governed by Rwodi.<sup>80</sup> Chiefs, who were male, would come from one clan and they would have control over several villages. People lived in hamlets and society was communal. Each person within the clan was expected to fulfil certain roles, these being reproductive and productive. All women and men, if able, were expected to marry. Exogamous marriages were practiced and it was the offering and acceptance of bridewealth, with the main offering being cattle, that cemented not only a marriage, but relationships between clans. Women upon marriage would leave their natal clan and move onto the communal lands of their husbands' family, as land was patrilineal. All women and their children, these being children who belonged to the clan of their father, were afforded land. Other than the expectation to marry, polygamous unions were also a social norm as it was believed that the more wives a man had the stronger a man's family would be and also that the agricultural output from a large family with many wives would be greater. If women became widows it was expected that they would take a levirate husband. It was the levirate husband's duty to protect his wife, who would often be the second wife, and their children. There was a clearly defined hierarchical social order which was headed by a male patriarch, and clearly defined social values were also evident. These values were believed to be connected to the spiritual world (Atkinson, 2010).<sup>81</sup>

Between the arrival of the British and the emancipation of Uganda in 1962 the Acholi region of Uganda experienced minimal development. The Acholi as a people were seen as being inferior to their colonisers and not regarded as a threat to the empire. Owing to this, and due to their physical attributes, Acholi men were actively encouraged by the British to join both the army and the

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<sup>80</sup> Chiefs and rulers

<sup>81</sup> Owing to the limited literature on the Acholi from a historical perspective, the above account is a summary from an interview that I conducted with a Rwot and also from the work of Girling (1960) and (Atkinson, 2010).

police (Atkinson, 2010). The main change though, that was imposed on the Acholi by the British was the introduction of the Bugandan style of council chiefs.<sup>82</sup> The political authority in the region was also restructured with the introduction of a new paramount chief.<sup>83</sup> In addition, many former chiefdoms were amalgamated, the effect being that people became ruled by chiefs to whom they had no affiliation. Others were simply removed or demoted. Those chiefs who were fortunate enough to remain in power, were however, controlled by the British and closely supervised. Through all these changes, subsistence farming and animal husbandry continued, as the main productive and reproductive activities.

#### **4.2.1 Emancipation and war**

Since its emancipation in 1962, up until 2006, Uganda was marred by various wars. Throughout all of these wars the Acholi were affected. Prior to the 1986-2006 civil war between Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Movement, (NRM) and Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army, (LRA), Uganda was destabilised through war by Idi Amin. It was during his dictatorship between 1971 to 1979 that as many as 500,000 people were murdered, many of them Acholi (Finnström, 2008).<sup>84</sup> Uganda's second key phase of war, was between 1981 and 1986. Unlike the war that was waged against the citizens of Uganda by Amin, the 1981-1986 Bush war in the Luwero triangle was between the incumbent president Milton Obote and his predominantly Acholi army and Museveni's NRM (Atkinson, 2010). When Museveni finally won in 1986, he initially blamed the Acholi for being responsible for Uganda's violent past (Finnström, 2008). Owing to this, the Acholi found themselves marginalised and removed from the rest of the country. As Atkinson (2010) observes, the

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<sup>82</sup> Prior to the arrival of the British, the Acholi Kingdom was made up of loosely knit clans, each of which was headed by a nominated Rwot, chief, who would typically be the eldest son. Each Rwot was supported by a council of elders. Under British rule the Rwot Moo was stripped of his power and replaced by a Rwot Kalam, a chief of the pen, the Rwot Kalam was an educated Acholi who served the colonial administration. Even if the Rwot Moo was stripped of his powers they still continued to informally rule.

<sup>83</sup> The paramount chief was the Rwot Moo of the largest clan, this being the Payira clan.

<sup>84</sup> The figure given is an estimate by Amnesty International. Others, most notably the International Commission of Jurists in Geneva, estimate that no less than 80,000 were killed, with the figure more likely to be closer to 300,000.

Acholi were in effect written off by Museveni and his government. It is this marginalization that is often believed as being a justification for why the civil war was permitted to last as long as it did.

#### **4.2.2 Museveni, the LRA and the Acholi<sup>85</sup>**

During the civil war the Acholi experienced numerous hardships, one of which being the loss of their primary asset, cattle, to the neighbouring Karimjong, and also Museveni's army (Dolan, 2011; Weeks, 2002; Westbrook, 2000). Apart from the loss of cattle as a prime resource, during the war it is estimated that the LRA kidnapped as many as 20,000 children, both female and male. Many of the boys were forced to be child soldiers and the girls were expected to assume the status of wives for the soldiers.<sup>86</sup> People were also forced to live in internally displaced people's camps (IDP). In 2004 nearly two million people or 90% of the population (that consisted of predominantly poor subsistence farmers) were living in camps (Finnström, 2008).<sup>87</sup>

People who had once been self-sufficient subsistence and commercial farmers were forced to rely on food aid from the World Food Programme (WFP) and other international bodies. However, as Dolan (2003) notes, the food aid assistance given was both erratic and inadequate. Not only did international NGOs become the providers of food, but they also challenged the gender dynamics of traditional practices. In camps women became the de facto heads of the household, even if the male member of the household was present, as food aid was distributed to them (Mulumba & Kindi, 2011). It was also women who would undertake various activities to secure the survival of their families. In essence, the male role of the household became redundant. This ultimately altered men's and women's roles and responsibilities, creating an artificial situation within the camps (Meintjes, 2001). Kindi (2010) supports the notion that the traditional role of patriarch was taken away from men through the actions of the various NGOs, and that in numerous cases, men turned to drinking and in some cases abandonment. There are several reasons why the

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<sup>85</sup> For a more detailed account of the LRA war please see Appendix One.

<sup>86</sup> Those taken for at least a day are thought to number between 60,000 to 80,000. (Berber and Blattman, 2010; Annan, et al., 2006). My husband is one such person.

<sup>87</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of the civil war see (Dolan, 2011; Allen and Vlassenroot, 2010; Finnström, 2008; Branch, 2011).

NGO community may have deemed it appropriate to distribute food aid to women rather than to men. Firstly, owing to polygamy, if a man was to be given the food aid, then there may not be enough for all of the wives within the household. Secondly, this method could have been chosen by external international NGOs as a way to challenge gender inequality.<sup>88</sup> Or, on a more practical note, they may have chosen to distribute food in this way as they needed to make sure that children would receive food.

The precise number of people who were killed by the LRA and Museveni's troops or who died in the camps is unknown (Dolan, 2011). However, there are estimates that as many as 300,000 people lost their lives between 1986 and 2006 (Adelman & Peterman, 2014). In 2004 Jan Egeland, the UN chief Humanitarian Officer at the time referred to the situation in northern Uganda as a "moral outrage...and the biggest neglected humanitarian emergency in the World."<sup>89</sup>

#### **4.2.3 The legacy of war**

Upon the end of the war in 2006, people had to make the transition from living in camps to moving back to their homes.<sup>90</sup> This was a difficult time for all returnees, no matter how long one had been displaced for (some people lived in camps for more than ten years). The conflict in some areas of the region broke down social and cultural traditions, and paralysed economic activity. As Cagney (2010) notes, after the war the only thing that people actually had left, if they were fortunate at all to have anything, was the land that they had cultivated and lived on prior to being forced into IDP camps, although in some areas of the region, even this was under threat.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> International NGOs are at the forefront of challenging gender inequity owing to goal three of the Millennium Development Goals and also due to the various Human Rights declarations that many countries, including Uganda, are signatories to.

<sup>89</sup> As quoted in The Guardian on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2004.  
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/oct/22/2>

<sup>90</sup> There is no agreement as to the precise date of the end of the war between the state and the LRA. However, the general consensus is that, even though Kony never actually signed a cease fire or peace agreement, the war ended in August 2006 (Kindi, 2010).

<sup>91</sup> In certain areas of the region, when people did return home conflicts began around who owned which land and also who should be able to reside on the land (Human Rights Focus, 2007). Those who have been most vulnerable are women and children. Kindi (2010) and

### **4.3 Land Tenure**

The previous section gave a brief overview of key historical events that pertain to the Acholi and showed that the most important thing for the Acholi after the civil war was returning to their lands, as for most people it was the only thing that they had left. Owing to this I will now give a summary of land issues and laws that pertain to Uganda from pre-colonial times to the enactment of the 1998 Land Act.

#### **4.3.1 Land pre Colonial and During Colonial times**

In relation to land and the arrival of the British in Uganda, pre 1900, all land was customary, there were three broad types of customary tenure these being: communal tenure, clan tenure and nomadic/pastoral tenure (Bikaako & Ssenkumba, 2003). Customary land, be it clan, communal or nomadic, was 'owned' by families and not individuals. The concept of individual ownership was alien as singular ownership was not a cultural norm owing to the dynamics of the family institution whereby all of those that lived within the family knew what their role was and their place in the family hierarchy. The male head of the family, clan or tribe would be referred to as the 'owner'. Their role was that of protector of the land. It was also their duty to uphold the rights of all of those who lived upon it, including those women who had married into the family and their subsequent children; the rights of protection were also to be afforded upon the deaths of their spouses. In essence the role of the head of the family/clan was to hold the land in trusteeship or stewardship. As land was predominantly held through patrilineal inheritance women were generally not permitted to inherit the land that they lived upon. They were, however, guaranteed access to land so that they could produce food crops for themselves and their families. For reference CLT in Uganda to this day is still very similar, though it does vary from region to region. Boserup (1970) would argue that there was a harmonious ambiance to the family unit.

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(Onegi, 2010). The LTS however, has not changed. Land conflicts were not evident in the area where I conducted my research.

Upon the arrival of the British, Ugandan land tenure systems experienced major changes, changes that influenced both men and women. One of the most notable changes implemented by the British was within the Kingdom of Buganda. In brief, customary land that was within the Kingdom of Buganda became known as 'Mailo' land. In this area the British awarded large areas of land to the Buganda king and his notables, thus enforcing elite capture (Brett, 1973) as those residents who were already on the land suddenly found themselves to be paying tenants rather than residual occupants. Land allocated this way overlooked women completely as it was men who were allocated the land. Other than the introduction of the Mailo LTS, the intentions of the Crown were to promote either freehold, (this being full registered ownership), or leasehold land that could be leased for a specific time. They chose these land systems as customary tenure was deemed to be primitive (Adoko & Samuel ne, 2008). Both of these land tenure systems were encouraged as they promoted individual and private ownership; ownership that would allow for economic activity in a new cash economy (Batungi, 2008). As the various tenure systems evolved it was inevitably women who became disadvantaged with these changes as they were not given the opportunity to apply for either leasehold or freehold land (Tripp, 2003; Joireman, 2007). However, even if this was the case, other than land that was within the Buganda Kingdom, owing to the vastness of Uganda, the majority of clans, tribes and families (of which the Acholi were included) continued to live like they had done for generations without any major interruption to their way of life. Thus CLT continued among the Acholi.

#### **4.3.2 Land discourse since Independence.**

Following the emancipation of Uganda in 1962, the first significant changes witnessed in relation to land were ones that were made to traditional customary land. In the 1969 Public Lands Act, people who lived on customary land were, for the first time, allowed to apply for a leasehold over the lands that they occupied. Land could also not be alienated without the consent of those who resided on the land without the original occupier's permission



(Atkinson, 2010). However few people applied for a leasehold, as ultimately families were comfortable with CLT.

It was not until Idi Amin took power that there was any attempt to change LTS that had been introduced by the British and also to challenge the validity of CLT (Mugambwa, 2007). The 1975 Land Act stipulated that all the LTS that had been introduced by the British were no longer operational and that all land was to be transferred to the state. Anyone wishing to access land had to apply for a leasehold from the state. This also included customary lands. As with the British, owing to the demographics of the country and the political instability that marred Amin's regime, the 1975 Land Act was never fully implemented. Thus, CLT prevailed, as, too did LTS that were introduced by the British. The 1975 Act, however, remained on the statute books until the development of the 1998 Land Act.<sup>92</sup>

#### **4.3.3 Land Reform in Uganda, the 1998 Land Act, its relevance and implications for women.**

Customary land is still to this day the main LTS in the country. (That is even if, as noted in the 2013 National Land Policy, (NLP) it is seen as being inferior to other LTS, and that it is a LTS that should be encouraged to evolve, especially when allocating land to women and joint ownership).<sup>93</sup> Nationally customary land accounts for 80% of land holdings (Veit, 2011). In fact, in some areas of the country, particularly the North, CLT is believed to account for 99% of land holdings (Atkinson & Hopwood, 2013).<sup>94</sup> Customary land is defined by the 1998 Land Act as being:

“a system of land tenure regulated by customary rules which are limited on their operation to a particular description or class of persons.”

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<sup>92</sup> The volatile political landscape of Uganda's since its emancipation has been well documented, especially during the time of Idi Amin. For a detailed account see, (Atkinson, 2010; Mutiwa, 1992; Keatly, 2003; Finnström, 2008; Mwakikagile, 2013; Decker, 2014)

<sup>93</sup> The reason why I have not gone into detail about the NLP is because it is not a legal document; however, for an overview NLP of 2013 and how it addresses CLT see Appendix Two

<sup>94</sup> Unlike Mailo, freehold and leasehold CLTS were (until 1998) never legally recognised.

It is a LTS that as per the NLP of 2013 should be recognised on a par with other LTS, and a LTS that should be supported in its registration. When analysing the 1998 Land Act, other than examining how the 1998 Land Act affects women, I have also given specific attention to Acts that pertain to CLTS.

In relation to customary land, since the Land Act of 1998, those living on customary land have been encouraged to register their land at the local Land Commission, as up until the 1998 Land Act, CLT was never legally recognised. Act 6 of the 1998 Land Act, “a certificate of ownership,” guarantees conclusive evidence of ownership. Conclusive evidence of ownership is deemed important as registration permits for a market economy to be realised. This means that there are official records that indicate what is owned or not owned by occupants. It would also guarantee that the land is on a par with freehold tenure. Having a certificate of ownership would theoretically also allow for any contestation of who owns the land to be able to be resolved through state judicial systems. Registration of land is also, in theory, a way of protecting the rights of women in accessing land, and continuing to have security of occupancy on the land to which they reside since all those who reside upon the land should be included within the registration document. However, even if land is to be registered, owing to patriarchal social relations any land registered would only be in the name of the head of the household, which, as noted in Chapter Two, would be a male member of the family. Thus, in reality this is a clause that may make the rights that women have to land, even weaker.<sup>95</sup> A certificate of ownership would also go against the fundamental principles of customary land, as no one individual is supposed to make claim to owning land. This applies not only to women, but also to men (Atkinson & Hopwood, 2013; Adoko & Samuel ne, 2008). For reference there have been several attempts by the Government to introduce a certificate of customary ownership in the North of Uganda, (in fact one of the key elements of the NLP of 2013 is to encourage people who live on customary lands to register their

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<sup>95</sup> A similar programme has been implemented in Madagascar. As Widman (2014) observes, there have been some successes in the registration of customary land. However, women have been overlooked owing to a lack of “gender equality principles.”

lands) all of which have been met with resistance and suspicion and also been challenged by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), which are concerned with land rights for both men and women. The Land and Equity Movement of Uganda (LEMU) is one such CSO. Even if Act 6 of the 1998 Land Act is flawed, one Act that is of interest in terms of gender is Act 27:

Any decision taken in respect of land held under customary tenure, whether in respect of land held individually or communally shall be in accordance with the custom, tradition and practices of the community, concerned; except that a decision which denies women or children or persons with disability access to ownership, occupation or use of any land or imposes conditions which violate articles 33, 34, and 35 of the Constitution on any ownership, occupation or use of any land shall be null and void.

In essence, this is an Act that should protect women from displacement or unequal access to land. Nevertheless, as I will discuss in Chapter Six, for a woman (most specifically a widow) to be able to occupy the land of her late husband she must be prepared to make several socially expected concessions.

Other than Act 27, another Act that is of significance for women is Act 40, the 'Consent Clause'. Act 40 emphasises that if an owner of land wishes to sell land, be this CLT or any of the other LTS in Uganda, they must first get the written consent of their spouse. In theory this seems logical. However, even if there are laws to support women, traditional practices, practices that support the subordination and unequal treatment of women, are commonplace. Adoko and Samuel ne (2008:109) illustrate this in their research when they interviewed men about how relevant they deemed the consent clause to be and its effectiveness, and also about whether women should actually be consulted on such issues. They received responses such as,

“women have weird thoughts and suggestions and do not understand quickly, so it is not necessary to involve them in the land sales. I would rather involve the clan in the sale than the wives.”

It may be deemed by some men unnecessary to involve women in issues that involve the discussion of land sales, but in essence it is a legal requirement to do so. It is statements like these that demonstrate that women can be seen as being inferior to men and that it is the clan, and or husband's kin that takes precedence over their wives. This supports the secondary role that women occupy in the family unit.

Apart from the possibility of some men deeming it inappropriate to discuss such matters with their wives, the consent clause can also be challenged by the male members of the family if they deem the reason given by a woman to be invalid. It is unclear who can or does make the final decision as to what happens to the land. However, in a patriarchal society one can assume that it would nearly always be the male members of a family. Also in relation to written consent, it is widely known that women in rural areas of the country, are often illiterate. This is especially the case in areas where there have been disruptions in education, (for example in northern Uganda due to war). Women, may not be in a position to sign a consent form as they may not be able to read what is actually contained in the document. As WFP (2013) notes, in northern Uganda where customary tenure prevails, the percentage of women who are illiterate is 74%, whereas for men it is 22%. Thus, Act 40 could be open to much abuse.

The major problem with the 1998 Land Act is that a vital section is missing. As noted by Whitehead and Tsikata (2003), the proposed co-ownership clause was left out of the Land Act, even if the amendment was tabled in front of Parliament, debated and adopted by the floor and further summed up by the Speaker of the House (Asiimwe, 2002).<sup>96</sup> The justification given for its absence was that when the Land Act was tabled there had been procedural irregularities, thus the justification for the proposed co-ownership clause to be disqualified (Tripp, 2002; Manji, 2006). Other than these so called irregularities, Uganda's President, Yoweri Museveni, admitted to personally

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<sup>96</sup> Theoretically the co-ownership clause was to be included as it would in theory support and promote women's participation in decision making processes, allow them to access credit and give them incentives to invest more of their time and resources in the land; the 1995 Constitution was a major influence to the Act, as too were the various UN conventions that Uganda had signed.

intervening to disqualify the amendment. Several male Members of Parliament, Museveni included, were concerned that if women were given co-ownership rights that they could enter into marriages solely for property and land accumulation, thus the amendment belonged to the Domestic Relations Bill (Manji, 2006).<sup>97</sup> To this day even if there have been numerous amendments to the Land Act of 1998, co-ownership by husbands and wives has not been included. As discussed by Miria Matembe, the former Minister for Ethics and Integrity,

“I have lost hope about that provision. The clause will never get to Parliament.... You never know, God may come to their rescue.” (Miria Matembe, quoted in Kyomuhendo & McIntosh, 2006: 197).

The actions of Museveni clearly reflect Connell’s point in relation to gender regimes (see Chapter Two). This shows that the state is, as proposed by Brown (1992), masculine, and Mackinnon (1991) male gendered.

#### **4.4 The state, the constitution and its influence on women.**

Having highlighted some of the limitations and contradictions of the 1998 Land Act, especially those that pertain to women, I now give further supporting evidence as to how the state is intrinsically patriarchal. Even if Uganda is often seen as the poster child for equality in SSA; in fact it is a state that is actively supporting the subordination of women through its patriarchal ideologies, and even if it is projected as having a liberal gender order that in reality the gender regimes that are evident are far from liberal, with its Constitution at the core of these inequalities.

##### **4.4.1 The gender-progressive State**

Gender relations within Uganda are multiple and discourses that pertain to equality and equity are relatively new. Uganda is, however, a country that is

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<sup>97</sup> The domestic relations bill stems back to 2003 and is concerned with marriage and divorce. For an overview of the bill see [http://www.chr.up.ac.za/undp/domestic/docs/legislation\\_19.pdf](http://www.chr.up.ac.za/undp/domestic/docs/legislation_19.pdf). For reference it is still to be passed.

one of the few in SSA that is often cited as being gender progressive (Rugadya et al., 2007). This is supported by Wanyeki (2003:306), who concludes,

“ In Uganda, there exists a formal and institutional recognition of the role and the rights of women in national development comparable to few other countries in Africa.”

Nevertheless, this has not always been the case and as I will illustrate, in most instances, still is not the case. Prior to Museveni's takeover of the government in 1986, as noted by Mulumba (2002), issues that pertained to women were in general neglected.<sup>98</sup> Since being in power, Museveni's NRM party has been recognised as being a party with a president who is proactive in relation to improving the standard of living for women within Uganda and for actively supporting gender empowerment. This is despite, as noted, Museveni actively blocking co-ownership to land.<sup>99</sup> For example, Uganda is a signatory to numerous human rights documents including the following: The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against women, (CEDAW); International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, (CCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.<sup>100</sup> In relation to Gender Empowerment, in 2014 Uganda came 49<sup>th</sup> out of 183 on the gender empowerment index.<sup>101</sup> This has been attributed in part to the number of women now actively employed in both political and government offices. Since 1995, female representation in Parliament has increased from 18%, to 35% in 2013 (ibid).<sup>102</sup> However, even if there are more women in parliament and political office, as Kyomuhendo and McIntosh (2006) argue, once elected to

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<sup>98</sup> For an overview of how Museveni came to power see Kobusingye (2010) and Tripp (2010).

<sup>99</sup> However there are those, for example Kyomuhendo & McIntosh (2006), who would argue that his approach has been related more to equity than to equality, and that with regards to empowerment his policies are still lagging as he is also of the opinion that women should and still need to continue with their traditional duties.

<sup>100</sup> None of these documents are legally binding or universal. There are those, for example, Cranston (1983) who would argue that they are simply moralistic ideas.

<sup>101</sup> The Gender Empowerment Index, (GEI) is an index that measures the inequalities between women and men's opportunities within their country. It looks at the following: Political participation and decision making, Economic participation and decision making and power over economic resources.

<sup>102</sup> The main ministerial position that is concerned with issues that pertain to women is the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. This is a position that partly developed owing to the intervention of both national and international NGOs (Kyomuhendo & McIntosh, 2006).

Parliament women are not always effective as advocates for change, equity or empowerment for women. Women MPs are often silent; (ibid) those who do speak out and those who have spoken out in the past are often ridiculed. That said, there is no denying that having female representatives in power is a step forwards for women. Nevertheless, whether gender empowerment trickles down to female subsistence farmers and those who are involved in the informal cash economy is definitely questionable.

#### **4.4.2 The 1995 Constitution and its limitations for women.**

As noted above, Uganda is championed as being a gender sensitive nation, (even if there are clear flaws in this observation, especially within the 1998 Land Act). It is seen as a nation that promotes gender equity, albeit for a selective group of elite women, and it also has in theory a Constitution that supports the rights of all women to equality and equity. The following Acts demonstrate this:

Article 21-All persons are equal before and under the law in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life and in every other respect and shall enjoy equal protection of the law... a person shall not be discriminated against on the ground of sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, tribe, birth, creed or religion, social or economic standing, political opinion or disability.

Article 33- Rights of Women.

(1) Women shall be accorded full and equal dignity of the person with men.

(2) The State shall provide the facilities and opportunities necessary to enhance the welfare of women to enable them to realise their full potential and advancement.

(3) The State shall protect women and their rights, taking into account their unique status and natural maternal functions in society.

(4) Women shall have the right to equal treatment with men and that right shall include equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities.

(5) Women shall have the right to affirmative action for the purpose of redressing the imbalances created by history, tradition or custom.

(6) Laws, cultures, customs or traditions which are against the dignity, welfare or interest of women or which undermine their status, are prohibited by this Constitution.

Article 37- Every person has a right as applicable, to belong to, enjoy, practice, profess, maintain and promote any culture, cultural institution, language, tradition, creed or religion in community with others.

In analysing Articles 33 and 37, it would appear that there is a contradiction in terms, and that the Acts are removed from the reality that is evident on the ground. As noted above, customary patrilineal inheritance is still the cultural norm (Biakaako & Ssemkumba, 2003), especially in the North of the country. If women were equal then this would not be the case and women would be automatically permitted to inherit their father's land and also have their husbands reside with them on that land. As discussed in Chapter Two, and as I will later refer to in the following data chapters, this is not the case. If we specifically look at Act 6 of Article 33, those who administer traditional cultural practices (practices that favour men) may not perceive that a woman's status is being undermined, even if certain customary practices clearly support patriarchal ideologies, ideologies which clearly undermine a woman's agency and reinforce a woman's subordination. This leaves us with a level of ambiguity; after all which article takes precedence? The right to culture or the rights of women? Also, in relation to addressing the imbalances of history, is this Act implying that all patriarchal practices should be reversed? Other than this, if women are not to be discriminated against and they are to be treated equally in marriage, why then are patrilineal inheritance traditions and polygamy and bridewealth still the cultural norm? Surely these are traditions that repress the constitutional rights of women. As discussed in Chapter Two, there are numerous reasons why bridewealth is deemed as being a problem for women, as too is the practice of polygamy. In relation to Article 33, (2) how are women supposed to be able to achieve their full potential in an agrarian



society if they are not permitted to inherit land or if their land access is contingent on gendered relations? With regards to Act 4 of this Article, if women were treated equally then surely there should be more female MPs in Parliament. The Act that I find the most interesting, and possibly most limiting, is Act 3. Why are women's statuses unique? Is it because women are capable of bearing children? This Act, I believe, implies that a Ugandan woman's function and purpose in life is to have children, which, in a rigidly patriarchal and conservative country comes as no surprise. (This is an area that I will refer back to when discussing Acholi women as the power that men have over women's reproductive ability is imperative to a woman's status in society) However, what about a woman's freedom to choose?

#### **4.4.3 Respecting women's rights and legal dualism.**

The Ugandan Government has in place several mechanisms for an individual's Constitutional rights to be upheld and respected. Article 50 of the Constitution, clearly stipulates that

“any person who claims that a fundamental or other right or freedom guaranteed under this Constitution has been infringed or threatened, is entitled to apply to a competent court for redress, which may include compensation. Any person or organisation may bring an action against the violation of another person's or group's human rights.”

A problem here is that Uganda, like other areas of SSA, has a weak judicial system (Joireman, 2008; Whitehead & Tsikata, 2003). It is also a system that is not easily accessible to the general population, especially those who live in rural areas of the country, in particular women. Other than this, there is no knowing how many people are actually aware of their constitutional rights. Other than issues that pertain to accessing the judicial system, Uganda, like other nations in SSA, also has parallel legal systems, or legal dualism as it is commonly referred to. Legal dualism includes the laws of the state, laws that theoretically are relevant to all citizens regardless of their sex and gender, which, as I have already alluded to, do not seem applicable or realistic in the lives of many women in Uganda and traditional cultural/customary laws

(Wanyeki, 2003). These are unwritten laws that are developed by men, with no consultation with women.<sup>103</sup> Chanock (1998) asserts that customary laws are part of the colonial legacy which supported the interests of men and subsequently the patriarchal order. The laws are flexible, and are open to much interpretation. They are also laws that change from area to area within the country (Foley, 2007). That said, in relation to the Acholi there are several comprehensive written documents that have been agreed by all clans within the Acholi region and given support by the paramount chief, one of which being the Principles and Practices of Customary Tenure (PPCT).<sup>104</sup> It may not be a legal document as per the state but it is seen as legal, albeit in an informal sense in the Acholi region. As Frohnen and Grasso (2009) note, in areas of the world where there are, (as per the Western sense democratic institutions), the state is not always the ultimate authority. For example, in SSA they propose that the state is in effect a facade and not a unifying centre of power as is the case in other areas of the world. Sub Saharan African states, they claim coexist with much stronger powers with their authorities rooted in kinship and patron-client relations and that the liberal democratic ideologies of the state are less powerful.<sup>105</sup> This may explain the contradictions within the constitution. It may also explain why the clans are seen as having more power than the state (Asiimwe, 2001). This is an area that I will refer back to in the data chapters that follow.

#### **4.5 Women and de facto land access**

Having highlighted several problems that apply to women within both the Constitution and the Land Act, I will now discuss the empirical evidence that

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<sup>103</sup> Even if women are not a part of the process for defining and developing customary law's they are expected to abide by these rules and not to question their validity. It is these laws that form the foundations of everyday living, especially in the Acholi Sub region.

<sup>104</sup> The PPCT "Cik me loyo ki kit me tic ki ngom kwaro i Acholi" is a document that covers issues that pertain to customary land in the Acholi region. It was developed in corporation by his royal highness, the Lawii Rwodi David Onen Acana ii, the Acholi ministers, the Rwodi of Acholi land, Elders, CSO and key civil servants. Even if it is not deemed legal by the state as it was signed by the Lawii Rwodi, it is legal under traditional law. Please see appendix Three for a copy.

<sup>105</sup> From the data that I collected, this is something that I found to be true. People vary rarely refer to the state if they have a problem as the clans are expected to resolve any negative issues.

has been provided by others that pertain to women and land access and or ownership within Uganda, including the Acholi region.

#### **4.5.1 Legal ownership**

Of the land that is formally owned in Uganda, in freehold, Asiimwe (2002) argues that only 7 % is owned by women. In relation to the remaining 93%, women who use this land are left with just usage rights. Deininger and Castagnii (2004) argue that women own 10% of land in Uganda. Peterman et al. (2011) propose that the figure is 19%. It is clear from these figures that one must be cautious when generalizing figures that pertain to land ownership, as there are clear disparities and that these figures are open to much debate (Burke & Kobusingye, 2014). That said, the majority of women who do own land in freehold will be the educated elite in the urban areas of the country. Rural female subsistence farmers and those women who are also involved in the informal cash economy are unlikely to own their own land. This is even if it is they who are dependent on land for their household food needs and livelihoods (Yngstrom, 2002; Wanyeki, 2003). The justifications for this is that rural women lack access to key resources, high levels of poverty, a limited supply of land that is for sale, (this is especially relevant in areas where CLTS prevail) and also due to social pressures on women not to buy land. Married women, especially are not actively encouraged to own land in their own right, as it is generally believed that if a woman buys land of her own she is going against cultural norms, and that she is challenging the conjugal patriarch's power and authority. She may also be preparing to leave her husband. As noted by Asiimwe (2001:175),

“only improper women are not satisfied with what their husbands or other male relatives can provide them. “Proper” women take whatever is given to them with gratitude and teach their daughters to do the same.”

Other than married women experiencing resistance, if a woman wants to acquire land when she is widowed, single or divorced, more often than not she will be restricted to asking a male member of her family to help her in her endeavours in making a claim to land. (Razavi, 2007; Place, 2009; Carr, 2008).

And, as Wanyeki (2003), observes, if a woman approaches a bank for a loan so that they can buy land, it is common that the bank will ask a male relative to be a guarantor.

#### **4.5.2 Women's perceptions**

As noted, the percentage of women who are deemed as legally owning land is low. That said, however, there have been recent studies both in the North of the country and in other areas that clearly support the notion that women themselves perceive that they not only access land, but that they own land. This would contradict the statistics that illustrate that women have minimal land ownership or that, as noted by Asiimwe (2002) and Kyomuhendo and McIntosh (2006), they are only allocated a piece of land for household food production, and they are rarely permitted to own land, nor decide what is grown on family land, nor keep any monetary benefit from the sale of crops (Loftspring, 2007).<sup>106</sup>

In relation to the North of Uganda, the Acholi region included, in 2013 Burke and Kobusingye conducted a large scale research project. The project was concerned with understanding people's perceptions of land ownership and access. They defined ownership as being, " the act, state or right of possession" (2014:27) and access as being, " the right to use land for a residence, and or agricultural activities comprising cultivation and the grazing of animals in addition to the collection of minor forest products and consent" (2014:27). During the research they interviewed 1198 people, 76% of whom were women and 24% were men. They also conducted 21 focus group interviews that included the participation of 153 women and 17 men and also 60 key informant interviews. The reason why the Burke and Kobusingye research is of relevance is that it is one of the first research projects of its kind to be conducted in the post-conflict Acholi region. From the data that they collected they found that 63% of women reported that they owned land and

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<sup>106</sup> Even if Asiimwe and Kkyomuhendo and McIntosh propose that women are very vulnerable and that they have minimal control over the lands that they use. Neither of their studies included original empirical data.

that 86% had access to land. Their research concludes that 80% of widows reported owning land as well as 75% of divorced women. However, there are limitations to the validity of this data as only 2% of their female respondents were divorced. Also, the percentage of widows who were in the research was limited to 14%, neither do they indicate if the widows who they interviewed had taken a levirate husband. Of the few divorced women who indicated that they owned land, it is unclear if the land that they own is actually land that traditionally belongs to their fathers or another male relative, or if they had bought it in their own right. Even if this is the case, by simply perceiving that they own land, they are demonstrating that patriarchal ideologies of dominance are not completely rigid, as if they were then it is unlikely that these women would think that they owned land. In relation to married women, those who reported to owning land accounted for 62%. To me, this figure seems remarkably low, as when women marry and bridewealth is paid (especially in the Acholi region), traditionally the land of their husbands also becomes their land. With regards to single women, 50% indicated that they owned land; as with the other categories of women it is unclear if the land that they perceive to own is land of their fathers or land that they had bought in their own right. The Oxfam research implies that the category of women who are most at risk of not owning land is those who cohabit, as only 25% of women who cohabit reported owning land. In relation to those women who cohabit, it is not only they who are the most vulnerable to lack of land ownership, but also men in this category also reported low levels of land ownership. This, as (ibid) notes, supports the fact that marriage in the North is an institution that is held in high regard. Even if this is the case their research implies that a woman's ownership and or access to land is not contingent on their marital status.

I argue that, even if the authors did explain the conceptual differences between ownership and access, respondents may have perceived that they 'own' the land because they are culturally aware (more so if the LTS is CLT) that they have a right to use and possession. This is something that is supported by empirical research that was conducted by (Doss, et al., 2011). Between 2007 and 2010, 770 individuals, 53% of whom were women, from 11 villages in the areas of Kiable, Luwero and Kapchorwa were involved in research that was

led by Doss. Their data, that was generated by focus groups, surveys and several life history interviews indicates that not only do women believe that they automatically own land upon marriage, but they also support the notion that women can inherit traditional land, be this either from their fathers or from their husbands.<sup>107</sup> Their data also challenges the theory that a woman's access/ownership to land is not contingent on their marital status:

“land ownership is related to marital status.... Marriage is key to land ownership..... married women acquire land rights through their husbands, so married women are more likely to be landowners than women living in consensual unions. Without the formal ties of marriage, women have more tenuous claims to their partner's land” (2011:18).

Not only is a woman's access and ownership of land contingent on their marital status, but it is also clear from the above quote, that the payment of bridewealth is of great importance as it is bridewealth that binds a marriage, especially a customary marriage. What is missing though from the research that was conducted by Doss et al. (2011) is what these women need to do so that they can continue to reside and have ownership rights to the lands of their husbands. Is a woman's marital status enough, especially in a society where women are expected to conform to patriarchal ideologies of subordination? Or do they need to be prepared to do something else, to bargain and to negotiate within the family unit, as proposed by (Kandiyoti, 1988)?

Even if Burke and Kobusingye's (2014) research indicates that widows believe that they have secure ownership, there is empirical evidence that challenges these conclusions. Bikaako and Senkumba (2003) conclude that of the cases that were presented by women to the Federation of Women Lawyers, 40% of their cases were related to property grabbing by a widow's husband's family,

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<sup>107</sup> The research was conducted in three areas of Uganda, these being: Kiable, Luwero and Kapchorwa. No research was conducted in the north of the country. The justification for this being that land right/access issues for women are seen as being different in the north due to the War and that land is a very sensitive issue in this area. Due to this it is difficult for outsiders to do research in the area.

which is ironic owing to the fact that such acts of violence against women are illegal, as the following Constitutional Act shows.<sup>108</sup>

Article 26 (2) No person shall be compulsorily deprived of property or any interest in or right over property of any description.

In 2010 a consortium of NGOs that was led by LEMU found that in areas where customary tenure prevailed, between 50 and 75% of widows had been forcibly displaced from their land (Adoko, et al., 2011). Behrman et al. (2013) from nationally representative data found that only 36% of widows received their husband's assets, assets to which they were both legally and traditionally entitled.<sup>109</sup> The reasons given for why they were forcibly removed from their homes were due to the pressures on the land and due to those whose original land it is not wanting an outsider to have access to their land. This was applicable even if the widow may have lived and worked on the land for decades. Peterman (2011), also observes (from a survey that was conducted in the Mukono district of Uganda that involved 115 widows and took place between 2005-2007) that 41% of the widows surveyed had experience property grabbing. It is this evidence that supports the view that women are disadvantaged and that they live in rigid patriarchal societies. These findings are in complete contrast to Burke and Kobusingye (2014) who argue that it is very rare for widows to be evicted from their lands.<sup>110</sup><sup>111</sup> From the discussion above, it is clear that it is difficult to say whether patriarchal ideologies of dominance over women, as discussed in Chapter two, do in fact negatively influence a women's perceptions of, and ability to, reside on lands that they know to be socially theirs.

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<sup>108</sup> It is unclear which area of the country these widows come from.

<sup>109</sup> In the Adoko et al. (2011) and Behrman et al. (2013) papers they do not give an overview of the sample size, nor the methodology that was employed in the research that they refer to, hence why, the information has not been include here.

<sup>110</sup> It is unclear which area of the country these widows come from.

<sup>111</sup> What is of interest is that, as per the Succession Act, a widow only has claim to the marital home if her sons are younger than 18 or her daughters are younger than 21. This is in stark contrast to widowers who are permitted as per the PPCT to reside in the marital home even if the children are over the ages of 18 and 21.

In relation to state law, under state law the displacement of widows is illegal. The Succession Act Cap 139 states that widows are legally allowed to stay on their late husband's land, at least until they remarry. Even if this is the case, if a widow does not reside continuously on the lands of her late husband for six months, her legal rights to the land are forfeited. This in itself is a cause for concern and appears to be a direct contradiction to section 27 of the 1998 Land Act.<sup>112</sup> Even if there is some support for widows, the fact that a widow can only continue to reside on the lands of her late husband until she remarries, or if she can demonstrate that she has not left the land unattended for more than six months, shows that the Government are in fact not really that supportive of women and that widows are disadvantaged.

In relation to women who are not widows, from the research that was conducted by a consortium of NGOs and led by LEMU in 2010, 80-90% of women who were either unmarried or divorced had lost or were fighting for their land (Adoko et al., 2011). Even if this is the case, this study does not indicate which lands these women were fighting for, whether it was the traditional lands of their fathers or land that they may have bought jointly with an ex-partner or husband.

#### **4.6 Women's role in agriculture and the domestic domain**

Having given an overview of the challenges that women may face in relation to land ownership and the limited empirical data that pertains to land access and ownership for women in the Acholi region, I will now present an overview of the position of women within the agricultural sector and the domestic domain.

In relation to women and agriculture, women are responsible for producing 90% of the food crops that are grown for household consumption. As noted by both Negin et al. (2009) and Lastarria-Cornhiel (2006), women are the backbone of food production, not only for export but also for household consumption.<sup>113</sup> With regard to agricultural activity in the domestic domain,

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<sup>112</sup> Other elements of the Succession Act are discussed in Chapter Six, especially those that pertain to what widows are entitled to.

<sup>113</sup> It is estimated that women provide between 70 and 80% of the labour that is required for producing crops that are for export (CIA, 2011).



women are responsible for weeding, harvesting and preparation of crops, whereas men are responsible for clearing the gardens and for marketing the crops once they are ready to be sold, this is, if they produce cash crops. As in other areas of SSA, there are also men's crops and women's crops (Kasente et al., 2001; Karuhanga-Beraho, 2002). When domestic work is taken into account, women work considerably more hours than their male counterparts, as women are exclusively responsible for all childcare and domestic activity within the home (Appleton, 1996). On average in Uganda, the majority of rural women who are subsistence farmers and women who work in the informal cash economy, will work for 14 hours per day, which is nearly double that of their male counterparts (Brown and Haddad, 1995).

#### **4.7 Food security**

As agriculture is intrinsically linked to food production, I will now discuss food security in Uganda. In relation to present day food insecurity, if we are to accept the working definition of food security as was discussed in Chapter Two, then Uganda, like numerous other nations in SSA, has had fluctuating problems with food insecurity for decades. A recent 2013 WFP, Comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis (CFSVA), concluded that food insecurity in Uganda as a whole is a cause for concern, with 48% of people being classified as being food energy deficient, thus implying that their daily calorie intake is inadequate. In the North of the country the figure is 54%. 12% of people in the North are also believed to consume only one meal a day, 47% two meals per day and the remaining 40% three meals plus a day (IPC, 2014). The prevalence of food insecurity in the Acholi region as per the IPC (2014:22) can be attributed to the following: unreliable rains, low household incomes, high prevalence of livestock and human diseases, low safe water coverage and low household diversity. An observation that I would like to make is that the IPC report makes no reference to gender relations and no reference to land access, be this for women or men, which is ironic seeing that if one does not have access to land, you are unable to produce crops. This is an area that I will come back to in the data sections of this thesis.

Other than the data that has been presented by the IPC, the Global Hunger Index (GHI, 2014) has classified Uganda as having a serious food insecurity situation.<sup>114</sup> Diet diversification is limited and those most likely to have a restrictive diet are people who reside in the rural areas of the country, which is 87% of the population WFP (2013) or in the case of the Acholi region, 95% (IPC, 2014). In relation to households that are headed by women (FHH), the WFP research shows that a quarter of those residing in such households experience inadequate food consumption, as compared to male headed households where the percentage is closer to a fifth. Also, as noted by (ibid), 46% of FHH are energy deficient. The justification is that FHH are poorer than MHH, which, as I have argued in Chapter Two, is an issue that is open to much debate. With specific relation to Uganda, both Appleton (1996) and Ellis et al. (2006) propose that women in FHH are only marginally worse off than households that are headed by men.

Even if the data presented above shows that there is cause for concern in Uganda and in northern Uganda specifically, it is clear from the amount of food that is produced in Uganda and specifically in northern Uganda, that there is in fact no shortage of food. It is also this data that challenges the belief (as discussed in Chapter Two) that customary land is an inefficient tenure system as commercial food production is not inhibited (Peters, 2004).

Table Six. Selected crops are those that are classified as being staple crops in the area where I conducted my research. The quantity is in metric tonnes.

Region	Beans (MT)	Field Peas	Ground Nut	Sim-sim	Cassava	Sorghum
<b>Central</b>	167,276	302	32,757	127	2678	409,812
<b>Eastern</b>	98,834	3233	77,247	6,774	133,313	1,061,186
<b>Northern</b>	251,221	10,428	83,182	93,562	177,088	983,124
<b>Western</b>	411,945	2489	51,497	565	62,716	440,189

Table Six. National Crop production 2008. Adapted from the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, (MOAAIAF) (2011).

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<sup>114</sup> The Global Hunger Index, (GHI) is a classification system that is calculated each year by the International Food Policy Research Institution, (IFPRI) and looks at three indicators, these being: Undernourishment, Child underweight and Child mortality. It is believed to give a multidimensional approach to the identification of hunger.

Other than Sorghum and beans, the north actually produces larger quantities of many of the staple foods that are not only eaten in the north, but also in other areas of the country. However, even if the north does produce more than enough food, overall it is clear from the data that has been proposed by the WFP that this does not transcend to the household level, especially to households that are headed by women.<sup>115</sup>

#### **4.8 Acholi Women<sup>116</sup>**

Having given an account of the current food security situation in Uganda and the Acholi region included, I will now return my focus to the Acholi, most specifically Acholi women. The purpose of this section is to give a brief overview of the following: power dynamics that are evident between men and women, the prescribed gender roles of Acholi women, the relevance of marriage and children for Acholi women and the implications of divorce for Acholi women. A point that I would like to make, is that, even if the Acholi suffered during the twenty year war, the following discussion clearly shows that patriarchal social norms are still evident in the lives not only of women, but also of men, and that even if the social fabric may have been challenged, traditional practices that continue to support the subordination of women have changed very little. Also, owing to the war, a great deal of the literature that discusses the Acholi is concerned with post-conflict reconstruction projects and the international aid industry, and it is often generalisable and does not focus on how women access and sustain access to land and neither does it discuss food security in detail, other than to give emphasis that people still lack vital assets.

##### **4.8.1 Subordination**

Acholi women are subordinate to men, especially those who reside in rural areas of the region as their lives are controlled firstly by their father, their uncle

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<sup>115</sup> For reference the WFP (2013) report does not indicate if the FHH are de jure or de facto households.

<sup>116</sup> I am aware that the Acholi are far from a homogeneous group; however to simplify this discussion I refer to the Acholi as one.

or their grandfather, and then, in most instances, by the conjugal patriarch or husband. An Acholi woman's principal role in life, like so many other women in Uganda and SSA, is to conform to their prescribed gender roles as mothers and wives, thus they are defined by their heterosexual kinship relations. Owing to this, girls from a very young age are trained to know that it is important to care for and respect their future husbands and also the other male members of their families and community. For instance, when women and girls greet male members of their families and also male elders, they are expected to kneel and to bow their heads. This way of greeting is not practiced by men, as men are already known to hold a superior position to women. If a man were to bow, it would be a demonstration that they were akin and equal to women, which in a patriarchal culture would be and is unacceptable. In relation to meals, women will also, more often than not, share their meals with other women who reside in their compounds and with the children. They will not eat with the male members of their family. This is especially relevant to the patriarch, or the elder of the extended family.<sup>117</sup> Another way of illustrating and reinforcing a woman's subordination and inferiority to men is in the manner in which men and women sit. Women are expected to sit on the floor with their legs crossed; men on the other hand will sit on chairs. If a woman were to sit on a chair in a rural context it would be immediately assumed that she was not a well brought up woman and that she lacked respect for the gender hierarchy. If Acholi women do try and challenge their gender roles within society then, as noted by Dolan (2011:193), there will be consequences, "When the hen crows it must be slaughtered".<sup>118</sup> Women are also portrayed as being unskilled and without knowledge (Dolan, 2011). The justification for concluding that women are without knowledge may be due to the fact that women are often overlooked

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<sup>117</sup> Having spent a great deal of time in rural areas of the North of Uganda I am more than aware of these practices. My father in law, for example, would never eat with the rest of the family. My mother in law would eat with the other women of our family and also with the children. My husband would eat with the male members of his family. Owing to my being a foreigner and due to me not being able to speak the Acholi language I was permitted to eat with my husband, as too were my children. I have also never seen my mother in law sit on a chair.

<sup>118</sup> Translated from the Acholi phrase, "min gweni ma kete ka koko kalo twone kineko woko". It is unusual for a hen to crow and when it does, it is considered a bad omen. There is a belief that when a bad omen is known upfront, it can be averted. Whoever and whatever animal is considered a source of communicating/predicating a bad predicament, it is always eliminated/killed.

when it comes to education. The 2009 Gender Product Survey, (GPS) indicates that 51% of girls aged 6-17 have never been to school. The justification given are several of which the disruption that was caused by the war is one and also due to gender inequality. As I have already discussed illiteracy among women in the north is extremely high.

#### 4.8.2 Marriage and reproduction

As in other areas of the country, the ultimate goal in life for an Acholi woman is to marry, as marriage brings status. Marriages are exogamous and the process is long. Courtship (cuna) builds the relationships between the prospective bride and groom, but also the two families, (this is something that has changed very little since people started writing about the Acholi). The process of courtship requires the consent of both the future bride and groom's families; if consent is not given then a marriage will not be accepted. The payment of bridewealth can begin at any time and it is often a long-term process taking years (Whyte et al., 2013).

Acholi women will often marry when they are young, as Table Seven shows.

Age at first marry in northern Uganda	Sex: Female	Sex: Male
<15	6.4%	-
15/16	28.6%	5.8%
17	11.2%	5.8%
18	23.9%	10.4%
19+	29.8%	80.7%

Table Seven. Age when women and men marry in the North of Uganda. UBOS Gender Productivity Survey (2009).

Even if the age of consent for heterosexual relations under Ugandan law is 18, (United Nations, 2009) 46.2% of women are married prior to reaching the legal age of consent.<sup>119</sup> In contrast the figure for men is a mere 8.8%. The reasons why women marry younger and in much higher numbers than men are not presented in the GPS; however, it is likely that women marry young as they

<sup>119</sup> Section 129 of the Penal Code, Defilement of persons under eighteen, stipulates that it is illegal for anyone to have heterosexual sexual relations under the age of 18.

are expected to fulfil their social roles as wives and mothers. Poverty could also be a major contributor, as 43.5% of those who reside in the north, the Acholi included, live below the internationally recognised poverty line (WFP, 2013). The need to acquire bridewealth from a male's family, owing to the importance that it plays in social life, could also be a contributing factor to the low age of marriage. It may also be due to getting pregnant and having children. As observed by UNICEF (2015), in Uganda during 2008-2012, 33% of children, were born to women under the age of 18. Unfortunately there is no regional data given, so I am unable to say what the prevalence is in the Acholi region. However, whilst I was in Uganda I talked at length to my sister-in-law who is a midwife. She indicated to me that most of the women that she assists in labour are girls under the age of 18. Also, from my observations in the field, it was clear that most women had children prior to reaching the legal age of consent.<sup>120,121</sup> Other than this, as noted by Watson et al. (2014), early marriage is also accepted as it is expected to deter pre-marital sex.

Marriage is also extremely important for Acholi men, as the transition from childhood to adulthood for a man can only happen if he marries. Even if a man is economically secure, if he does not have a wife he is seen as a boy and not as a man. If a man is to fulfil his masculine role within the patriarchal hierarchical structure, or as Connell (1987; 2001; 2005; 2009) would say, the gender hierarchy, then he must be a married man. Not only should he be married, but he also needs to produce children and provide for his family. As a husband he also needs to be able to exercise control over not only his children, but also his wife (Dolan, 2011; Finnström, 2005).<sup>122</sup> Socially their role is also that of

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<sup>120</sup> Whilst I was interviewing one man, there was a child sat across from me holding a new born baby. I asked the man who the child was. He informed me that she was his 14 year old daughter and that the baby that she was holding was hers. As no bridewealth had been paid for her it was decided that she would have to stay at home.

<sup>121</sup> Nationally contraceptive use among rural, poor, uneducated married women, is used by only 13-15% of women (UBOS, 2011). There are multiple reasons for this, the first being that in most areas of the country women are socially expected to produce large numbers of children as it will facilitate them in fulfilling one of their principal gender roles. Also, it can be difficult for women to access appropriate birth control. Modern forms of birth control are also still not socially accepted (Creanga et al., 2011).

<sup>122</sup> On October 12<sup>th</sup> 2014, I was told by my brother in law that he is now a real man as he had recently gotten married. This is a man who as a boy was kidnapped by the LRA. Even if he has experienced great torment, he never classified himself as being a real man until he was married in the traditional sense.

protectorate.<sup>123</sup> For men to be socially accepted as being good husbands, other than their role as protectorate, they are also expected to provide for their families, pay school fees, clothe the family, be hard-working and hold down a job, not beat their wife and enforce discipline (Watson et al., 2014). Being a married man also gives you power and control over other men in your clan who are not married, which, as noted, echoes Connell's work on Hegemonic Masculinity.

Even if marriage is seen as the ultimate goal for both men and women, when a woman does marry, she loses her ancestral clan identity and assumes that of her husband. This also includes any cultural practices of the clan. Even if she does conform and integrates herself into her husband's clan and fulfils her gender roles as wife and mother, she will never be fully trusted and will inevitably remain an outsider (Dolan, 2011). This may explain why women do not participate in clan meetings nor are they involved in traditional leadership meetings.<sup>124</sup> Even if women are not involved in such processes, as noted by Baines (2014:409), "The familial unit is the central governance structure in Acholi society".

Most marriages in northern Uganda (as in other areas of the country) are customary of which 34.8% are polygamous unions (GPS, 2009). Under the statutory Marriage Decree of 1972, customary marriages are to be governed by customary norms and practices, not those of the state. A customary marriage as per the Marriage and Divorce Bill 2009 is defined as being:

"a marriage celebrated according to the rites, practices and customs of an African community to which one or both of the parties belong".<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> As women are perceived as being the weaker sex, men think that it is their role and duty to protect their women and their families. When I was conducting my field work, I was informed by several men that it is their duty to make sure that there is a spear and or machete in the house, so if they are attacked the man will be able to defend the home.

<sup>124</sup> The Acholi are a decentralised society, in which there are 54 major clans with several sub clans, all of which are headed by a Rwot. They make up the Acholi chiefdom with Rwot Achana II the Paramount chief as the head. He has a council of ministers. They also have a prime minister, who is head of the secretariat. None of the people involved at any level are women.

<sup>125</sup> The bill is yet to be past

Divorce is also governed by customs, customs which, as noted, exacerbate gender inequality.<sup>126</sup> As in other areas of SSA, when women do divorce in Uganda, the north included, women can often experience social exclusion, lose their children, their homes, access to their husband's ancestral lands and their livelihoods (Lodin, 2012).<sup>127</sup> Empirical evidence from Harris (2012a) echoes the view that Acholi women are seen as the property of their husbands and that upon divorce the women are left with very little. Because of this women are less inclined to leave a marriage and will often accept a lower status in the home as a bargaining for security.

When referring to the PPCT, under section 1:K a person is only considered to be divorced upon the refund of the bridewealth. However, if a women does want to divorce, then as noted in Chapter Two, this is something that can cause women great problems as most are not in a position to repay the bridewealth, so in effect nether men nor women can move on. As a marriage can only be ended upon the repayment of bridewealth, this is in effect something that goes against the Constitution, specifically Articles 33:1 and 33:6.

For a woman, producing children, most specifically sons, is pivotal to her success within the home. Until women produce children for their husband's clan they are afforded minimal rights and they are open to abuse. A woman's position within the family is also vulnerable. As noted by the GPS (2009), women in Uganda, the Acholi region included, have little or no say in reproduction. This is, as discussed in Chapter Two, conducive to patriarchal power relations. Acholi women historically have been defined exclusively in relation to their reproductive role. If women do not produce children, even if bridewealth has been paid, they will be sent back to the clan of her father. Women achieve respect through having children; the more children one has the greater respect that one will have, especially if they produce male children

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<sup>126</sup> Socially divorce is something that is not readily accepted. It is something that brings shame, not only to women, but also to men. My husband once told me that being divorced is worse than being single.

<sup>127</sup> For those women who divorce, Acholi women traditionally are to be welcomed back to the ancestral land of their father or another male relative, this being whoever the head of the family is.



(Girling, 1960). Not only do children give women an elevated status, but they are also a resource and in many cases women rely on their sons for land access when a male child comes of age. Not only do Acholi women have a limited say in their reproductive rights, when they do marry and have children they lose a sense of their identity, they stop being referred to by their given birth names and take on the identity of their children. For example, when I am in Uganda I am not referred to as Lisa, but as Mama Akello. Your status of mother is held in higher esteem than that of women who did not have children. This echoes what Bernard (1982) has said, insofar as women take on different identities when they marry.

#### **4.8.3 Acholi women in the home**

Not only do Acholi women have prescribed gender roles that relate to both marriage and motherhood, but they also have prescribed gendered roles within the home as workers and labourers. Acholi women in rural agrarian farming communities are responsible not only for planting, weeding, harvesting and post production food preparation, but they are also solely responsible for childcare and for the running of the home. It is these duties, as well as being humble and obedient, not engaging in gossip and making sure that their husbands are well cared for, that make Acholi and Ugandan women 'good' wives (Watson et al., 2014). They are also involved in the building of the thatched houses and the granaries for their crops. If they are to take any work outside of the home it would be either as a casual labourer on another person's land, as a seller of foodstuffs and, possibly, homemade alcohol at local markets, or other activities that are related to the informal sector. Very few women from agrarian communities migrate out of the villages to towns and the capital as their options are limited. Young girls, where appropriate, may work as babysitters or house helps for wealthier, educated Acholi.<sup>128</sup> However, the wages that they receive are low and they are often overworked. Many, given the chance, prefer to return to the village. In relation to Acholi men, men are responsible for hunting animals in the dry season, herding animals and clearing the gardens. They are also responsible for building the family home

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<sup>128</sup> I do not have a citable reference for this. However, from my observations whilst being among elite Acholi families, this is most definitely the case.

and for ploughing the gardens with oxen if they have access to these. It is also men who, if there is need and the possibility, will migrate for work. It is also men in rural areas who will have greater access to education. As you will observe, the division of labour is gendered and supports, as noted by Walby (1990), structural production relations within the household. There are clearly defined men's jobs and women's jobs and the roles are to be observed and respected. However, even if women may be seen as being subordinate to men, when it comes to who has the power within the household to decide how the proceeds of crops are spent within a family, Burke and Kobusingye (2014), from their research, conclude that the women who were involved in their research have a high level of power within the home when it comes to decisions that pertain to how proceeds from crops are used.

Table Eight illustrates their findings:

Decision maker	Male	Female
<b>Only the husband</b>	20%	15%
<b>Only the wife</b>	12%	27%
<b>Both the husband and wife</b>	66%	56%
<b>Relatives and in-laws</b>	2%	1%

Table Eight. Who determines how proceeds are used, by sex (Burke & Kobusingye, 2014).

It is this evidence that echoes the results from the 2011 Uganda Bureau of Statistics, (UBOS) that concluded that the north has the highest prevalence of joint decision making within the country and that 55% of women in the north perceive that decisions in the home are taken jointly. Women having power over food, and being part of joint decision making in the household, are also observed by Arnfred (2011) as the cultural norm in northern Mozambique. This is in contrast to Harris (2012:14b) who proposes that, " Men... control the income from joint family labour and have the power to make all household decisions." Women also, as observed by Harris (2012b), are under no obligation to support the family financially. This of course is only if the woman is married, as single women and widows have no other option than to

financially support their children. This is an area that I will discuss in more detail in Chapters Six and Seven.

#### **4.8.4 Acholi women and Land, the relevance of marital status**

With respect to land, how women access land in the Acholi region, as in other areas of the country, is contingent on gendered relations and roles (Atkinson & Hopwood, 2013). Viet (2011) argues that women in the Acholi region have substantial rights to land, due to it being socially accepted that all women regardless of their marital status are entitled to access land, be this from their husbands or their natal family. As argued by Atkinson and Hopwood (2013: iv), “rights for women in Acholi customary tenure are real and considerable”, thus indicating that male dominance is not by any means comprehensive or absolute within Acholi society. This may be why, as was the case in the villages where I conducted my research, land is undifferentiated. If a husband has five gardens then that means that his wife also has five gardens.<sup>129</sup> In the context of SSA this is unusual as women who access customary land are often given access to land that is semi-autonomous, as seen in the house property complex as discussed in Chapter Two. However, from my observations in the field, married women were not given a garden of their own where they would grow foodstuffs for the family, (thus semi-autonomous spaces) as they worked all of the gardens that their husbands were given access to as all of the gardens were used to grow foods that were for household food consumption.

As noted above, if women divorce, they will lose access to the land of their former husband. However, as per the PPCT (see Appendix Three), they should theoretically be given land to cultivate by their fathers or another male member of the family. Women who leave or who are abandoned by their husbands are often not in a position to buy land in their own right due to limited economic resources and due to the lack of land that is for sale. Thus they must return to the ancestral patriarch. And, also as noted by Adoko et al. (2011), it is their right to do so as single women have the same rights to their father’s land as do unmarried men.

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<sup>129</sup> This information was given to me through personal communications that I had with Judy Adoko of LEMU and also Emmanuel Egaru of the Uganda Land Alliance.

In relation to widows, if a woman loses her husband she has the right to continue to reside on the land of her late husband.<sup>130</sup> She also has the option of taking a de-facto husband from her late husband's clan. However, as noted by Atkinson and Hopwood, the process of taking another husband from the husband's relatives or being 'inherited' has (2013:15) "dropped out of the contemporary Acholi cultural lexicon." Adoko and Levine (2008) attribute the change in attitude to wife inheritance to the presence of HIV.

There are, however, those who would say that this is not the case and that women do not have any say in whether they are inherited or not. Loftspring (2007) writes that women have no choice and that they must be inherited and that it is a social practice that is still strong and frequent. This statement by Loftspring contradicts section 6:E of the PPCT. HRW (2003a) also conclude that if women do not agree to be inherited then they will be evicted from their lands. Ntozi (1997), in research that he conducted, argues that if a widow is young enough, thus still able to marry freely and have another family, then there is the possibility that she will not need to be inherited.<sup>131</sup> However, the bridewealth that was paid for her will need to be refunded to her deceased husband's family. If this is not possible then the widow will have no other option than to be inherited. In relation to widows and inheritance, Burke and Kobusingye (2014) give a contrasting view as to the position of widows in the Acholi region. They argue that women have a choice whether to stay on the lands of their deceased husbands or return to their ancestral homes. They also argue that women become the heads of their household once their husband has passed away and that they are in charge of the running of the home and also of how land is allocated to their male children upon marriage. However, as I have already indicated, their sample size was small and neither do they indicate if the widows are residing on the lands of their late husbands, or lands of their ancestral father.

In relation to customary marriages and land acquisition, any land that is bought during a couple's marriage is presumed to be that of the husband and not in

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<sup>130</sup> This is only applicable though to women who have been married in the traditional sense; those who have cohabited will be excluded from the land.

<sup>131</sup> For reference Ntozi's research omitted the North of Uganda.

equal ownership with their spouse. If the marriage fails, the wife will be left with nothing, even if she will have contributed both her labour and, where appropriate, her finances. As noted, this is something that goes against the state constitution and the state legal system.

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that, Uganda, since her emancipation, has been, until recently, a divided nation, where ethnic tensions have caused countless atrocities, especially among the Acholi people. Poverty remains a real problem, as too does food insecurity, especially in the Acholi region, even if, as illustrated, the region produces more than enough food. Gender inequality, although theoretically addressed by the Government, is still clearly a great cause for concern, as the limited Constitution demonstrates. Inequalities are evident in the labour market, especially the agricultural sector, and also within the domestic domain. Women, it would appear, are most definitely at the bottom of the gender hierarchy. This applies to the majority of Ugandan female farmers, and thus to Acholi women. That said, as observed, when it comes to making decisions in the household that relate to how proceeds from the sale of crops are used, some women do have a say. They are not completely marginalised. Thus Acholi society is not rigidly patriarchal.

In specific relation to land, theoretically as per the Constitution and the 1998 Land Act, all women are supposed to have the same opportunities, not only to own, but also to access land. However, as I have shown, there are numerous inconsistencies within both the Constitution and the Land Act. Not only this, but how women access and gain control over land is something that is fiercely debated, often with conflicting evidence being presented. One of the main problems is that there is no real understanding as to what ownership actually means and this is specifically relevant when discussing CLT. That said, it is clear that how women do access land, especially customary land, which, as noted, is the prevailing LTS in the country, is contingent on gendered relations, with a woman's marital status being key to this access and or ownership. Even if this is the case, what is missing from the studies that have been done in Uganda and also the Acholi region is, what do women have to do, so that they

can continue to access and own land and thus have the possibility of being food secure. Are the principles that are laid out in the PPCT, the Constitution and the Land Act enough? Or do women have to make concessions and conform to patriarchal ideologies?

With regards to Acholi women, an Acholi woman's role in life is to marry and to have children and to conform to the gendered order. There are strict rules governing the gender division of labour, with women bearing the burden of the work that is not only done in the gardens for food production, but also domestic responsibilities. Like other women in Uganda, how they access land is through their marital status. Women will either acquire land upon marriage or be permitted to work on and reside on the land of the natal patriarch, this being land that is held in trusteeship. However, although Acholi women under customary law are supposed to be able to have continued access to land, especially if they are widows, there is much debate as to the realities of this and also whether widows should accept being inherited and thus take a levirate husband. In relation to any land that may be bought during a marriage, it is clear that there is no equality in formal ownership as land bought would be registered only in the name of the husband. It is this evidence that supports that women are secondary in all LTS, and not just CLT.

Therefore, the following three data chapters, chapters that are presented according to a woman's marital status, this being; married, (of which cohabiting is included), widowed and single will now be presented.

From the data that I collected, I argue that if women in the villages of Adunu and Kom wish to continue to access and thus derive benefit from either their husband's ancestral lands, or their natal lands, that they must conform to and accept their given social gendered roles as wives, mothers, homemakers and subsistent agricultural farmers. They must also support the patriarchal gender relations that are used to support and reinforce their given gender roles, as echoed in the works of Connell (1987; 1995) and Walby (1990), and as discussed in Chapter Two. I also illustrate though, that even in male dominated societies, women do have agency .

## Chapter Five-Married Women

### 5.1 Introduction

The following chapter is presented thematically and is concerned with what married women in the villages of Kom and Adunu need to do so that they can continue to reside on the lands of their husband and how they derive benefit from the land of their husband's family.<sup>132</sup> Having a home and the ability to produce food are the main benefits.

The chapter draws upon the contextual narratives of the married women and married men that I interviewed and observed in the villages. The opinions and perceptions of elite members of the community, including local chiefs, are also presented (this is also the case in Chapters Six and Seven).

The first theme discussed is specifically related to the transition from generational patriarch (the father) to conjugal patriarch (the husband). As being married is normative within the villages, I will discuss how marriage is perceived and the importance that the institution of marriage affords not only to women, but also to men.

The second theme relates to married women's perceptions of land access and what land access means for them. Specifically, it addresses the contentious issue of inheritance and security over the land on which they reside.

The third section of this chapter is therefore concerned with issues that pertain to household food security. Firstly it discusses how married women and men define food security and addresses their perceptions of what it means to be food secure and what influences food security. It also discusses how labour is divided in the household and also addresses who has power over the prime resource of food and its production.

It is important to stress that all of the above mentioned themes are interconnected and that the married women and men who live in the villages

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<sup>132</sup> For reasons of confidentiality the names of the villages where I conducted my research have been changed.

are by no means a homogeneous group. Neither is the composition of households identical. Some of the married women who I interviewed are women in polygamous marriages; others reside in de jure households and have monogamous marriages.<sup>133</sup> As noted, all of these women access land in the same way, this being through their husband and their husband's families. However, unlike the house property complex, as proposed by Kevane (2004), whereby wives are allocated a certain garden that is for them to grow foodstuffs that are for household food consumption. Land in these Acholi villages is undifferentiated by gender, that is, women get access to their husbands' gardens and they are allowed to grow crops on all of the gardens that their husbands will have been allocated. This is the case as few people in the villages grow commercial cash crops. People are mainly poor farmers who cultivate enough crops for their household food needs and in some instances also for sale at the local market. Though there are people who are subsistence farmers.

## **5.2 Marriage, as a social expectation. From generational to conjugal patriarchy**

As discussed in Chapters Two and Three, the institution of marriage is of great importance, not only in SSA, but also in Uganda, the Acholi region included. With this in mind, for me it was important to gauge the opinions of both married women and men in relation to how they perceived themselves within marriage and also what the role of wives actually entailed. However, prior to entering into a customary recognised marriage in the local context, as in other areas of the Acholi region, there can be no marriage unless bridewealth has been paid.<sup>134</sup> The payment of bridewealth is seen by both men and women as a vital and necessary social norm, as not only does it give legitimacy to a marriage, but it also affords a certain level of security to women. As I will discuss later

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<sup>133</sup> Women who reside in de Jure households are women whose bridewealth has been paid. However, their husband's spend most of the year living away from their wives.

<sup>134</sup> There is nothing to say that women and men cannot co-habit. However, unless bridewealth has been paid women can be vulnerable. That said, if they do co-habit and have children, if there is a breakdown in their relationship, they will keep any children that have been produced. This is in stark contrast to women in the villages who marry.



in this chapter, bridewealth also gives women rights, access to and control over land.<sup>135</sup>

### 5.2.1 The social importance of bridewealth

With regard to the importance and current-day relevance of bridewealth, when I asked the former District councillor, (LC5) about its relevance and whether he believed it would be a tradition that would continue to be adhered to, even if there is a great deal of opposition to it (see Chapter Two), he responded that he was quite clear that bridewealth was a traditional practice that was here to stay.<sup>136</sup>

*“Yes, it will continue, it has to. Because, if not, women will be warming the compounds of their father’s land for nothing. The elders are very rigid on this. Dowry is a part of us; it is our tradition.”*

It is clear from the above quote that there are well defined social expectations for women with regard to getting married, and leaving their father’s lands is something that is expected. If women do not leave, then they are seen as a burden. Not only are women who do not marry seen as a burden, but they are also challenging social norms. From what the LC5 said, he also seems to imply that if a woman does not bring any bridewealth into the family she is unable to leave the household. This indicates that there is a strong propriety element to bridewealth Therborn (2004), as was also supported by Rwot Levi,

*“The Acholi people believe that they have paid dowry; women are our property and whatever they produce is also our property.”*

This indicates that women are seen as a man’s property. The quotations clearly support and reinforce that women are subordinate to men and

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<sup>135</sup> As noted in Chapter Four, there is a great deal of negativity towards bridewealth as it is often seen as the acquisition of a person. I will discuss the repayment of bridewealth in detail in Chapter Seven when looking at single women.

<sup>136</sup> LC5 Local council Level Five. Responsible for a whole district. There are 112 districts in Uganda. For a detailed overview of the local council system see Appendix Eight.

reinforces that the villages are intrinsically socially patriarchal (Johnson, 2005; Walby, 1990). As noted by Aceng,

*“Our traditions tend to put women lower than men; they make us submissive.”*

Not only are unmarried women a burden, but the payment of bridewealth is also important for the continuation of what Goody and Tambiah (1976) refer to as the “social fund” (see Chapter Two). Families often use the bridewealth that they get for a daughter to pay for a wife for their sons. This is something that was supported by the Sub County Chief for Adunu.

*“Even if you do not want to get married, you should do. Because the money and animals that your family get for you can be used so that your brother can marry someone else. So, what I am saying is the dowry for you will be used as dowry for another woman. For a woman for your brother. You need to get married. Dowry is used to replace you.”*

Not only does the Sub County Chief stress that women must get married, which in a rigid patriarchal society is to be expected, (after all women need to be controlled by someone), but he also shows that the payment of bridewealth is used as a means to replace the woman for her lineage. Once again this supports the idea of a proprietary element to the traditional practice. In relation to tradition, ‘tradition’ I believe is used as a justification for keeping and supporting what is classified by others, (see Chapter Two), as an outdated custom. However, as discussed, tradition is far from static but is continuously evolving. That said, the traditional practices that appear not to be evolving, are those that support and reinforce the subordination of women. Even if this may be the case, the payment of bridewealth also gives women a level of entitlement and independence. It also affords women a sense of self-worth and that they are valued, not only by their husband, but also by their husband’s family. As noted by Samuel,

*“A girl will not feel very happy, looking at her own self, as a married woman, unless dowry has been paid.”*

Not only does the marriage payment give a woman the perception and feeling of a sense of worth but also if women live on the lands of their husband and bridewealth has not been paid, the children that she might have had belong to her and to her ancestral clan.<sup>137,138</sup> However, if her husband dies and no bridewealth has been paid then she has no legitimate claim to the land where she will have lived with her ‘husband’. The payment of bridewealth also shows that the husband is committed to her and that his family also endorse and support the union. Another reason why the payment of bridewealth is important in the local context, is that if no bridewealth has been paid and you as a woman fail to comply with your socially imposed gender roles then they will be vulnerable to the whims not only of your husband but also of his family.

I met one such woman who had moved onto the lands of her husband’s family whilst pregnant. No bridewealth could be paid for her, as among the Acholi bridewealth cannot be paid to the family of a woman if she is pregnant. Following the birth of her child, her husband’s family perceived her to be lazy and of no real benefit to either their son or to them as a family. The consequence was that both she and her child were ‘chased’ away.<sup>139</sup> Had bridewealth been paid prior to conception, then it is likely that she would not have been chased away owing to the importance of marriage and due to divorce not being socially accepted.<sup>140</sup> The child would also have been legitimised. However, as no money was paid, the child that was born during the co-habiting relationship was of no value to the male’s family. Thus the payment of bridewealth ultimately affords a village woman and her children

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<sup>137</sup> I use the word husband in this context to refer to what would be classified as a partner/boyfriend. The couple live together as if they were wife and husband, though they are socially not married.

<sup>138</sup> I will discuss the relevance of this in Chapter Seven.

<sup>139</sup> The woman in question was forced to return to the ancestral lands of her father. This is often the case when a relationship breaks down. Socially, she should never have been allowed to leave her father’s home as no bridewealth had been paid to her father and she was also pregnant.

<sup>140</sup> Divorce does happen, however, it is not openly accepted as the constitution of marriage is supposed to be respected.

security, be this a home and or access to and maintained access to land for crop production.

I will refer once again to the importance that bridewealth affords women in Chapter Seven when discussing single women, as there were several women that I interviewed who had lost everything because no bridewealth had been paid for them.

### **5.2.2 Bridewealth and marriage.**

I did learn from the interviews that I conducted, especially with married women, that marriage equated to breathing insofar as it is a natural function and one that they (village women) cannot do without. Socially it is a woman's duty to marry and if she does not marry then, as a woman she is not complete. As one respondent, Anwomy Katherine, said,

*"It is important to marry because a woman who is not married is undisciplined. Our main role as women in our culture is to marry, serve our husbands and to produce children; we are the home makers and we are there to support our men. Also men fear not being married; if you as a man are not married you are not seen as a true man."*

The importance that is given to the role of marriage was also discussed by Alice, the female representative of the Twero clan.

*"For us Acholi women it is very important that we marry. Until you marry you will never be respected. It is also then when you will have authority in the home."*

All of the married women and men that I talked to agreed that marriage is the most important thing that an individual can do and that there is no real debate as to its validity. In relation to the importance of marriage for women, it is clear from the above quotes that marriage gives a woman a sense of power and increased independence. It is marriage that gives a woman her home. It is marriage that breaks the ties between the generational patriarch and confirms them to the conjugal patriarch. There is, as noted, a sense of pride and also of achievement. Yet, there is also a men's marriage and a woman's marriage,

as men are always in the dominant position of power and authority; after all women are to serve, to provide children and to be homemakers. It is these clearly defined and accepted norms that facilitate the continuation of the dichotomous gender roles and support patriarchal gender relations.

The supportive role of a woman was also addressed by married men in the villages.

Okid : *“a female supplements, or complements.”*

Other than the social expectations of marriage, marriage is often the only option available for women in the villages. As noted by Alice,

*“In most cases us women here, we reach only senior four.”<sup>141</sup>*

*When you have that you can even opt not to look for a job and just concentrate on getting a husband and your home.”*

In the village context, not looking for a job is a social norm as there are no formal jobs within the villages for women; neither are there for men other than employment at the local primary school or in local Government. The only other options available are those of casual labourer or working in one of the bars along the roadside. Many women actually marry before they finish school as they often end up pregnant and thus their education is disrupted. This reinforces what Anwomy Katherine said, that the role of a woman in the villages is to marry and have children. If this is the case, what then does a woman have to do to remain married and to be a good wife?

### **5.2.3 The good village wife**

For women in the villages to be classified as being ‘good wives’ and for a marriage to be successful it is important that they adhere to the teachings of the chiefs. The opinions of the chiefs are those that are culturally supposed to be respected and not challenged.<sup>142</sup> It is these opinions and beliefs that are passed

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<sup>141</sup> Senior four is the equivalent to GCSEs in the UK. From the data presented in Chapter Four and from my observations it could be assumed that most, if not all of the married women that I interviewed, did not have senior four as none of them knew English. English is the language of instruction in Uganda.

<sup>142</sup> As discussed in Chapter Four, there is a great deal of debate as to the continuing strength and the influence that chiefs have in the Acholi region owing to the effects of the

down to the general Acholi population, their subjects, through the hierarchal system. This system, as noted in Chapter Four, negates women at every level. It is the opinions of the chiefs that support and reinforce the socially defined gender roles and relations for women, especially for those women who live in the rural areas of the Acholi region. When I asked Rwot Moses what the role of rural Acholi women was, or more specifically what women under his control were expected to do as wives, his response was this:

*“As a woman she should produce children in the home. That is one. A woman should stay together with the husband so that they can get what to eat and feed the children. A woman should be in a home, so that she can go to the garden with her husband; she should go to the garden with him to dig. It is important that a woman looks after the crops, that she works hard so that she can feed her children and so that they can grow well.”*

Rwot Moses continued, saying:

*“You should make sure that you do everything that will make your man happy, like if it comes to evening and it comes to bed, if he asks to have sex, then you should not hesitate; that is what you started with and that is what you should give him. You should not deny him that.”*

There are several things that are of interest in the above statements. Firstly, it is clear that it is the husbands who should have control over the reproductive system of their wives, as a woman should not deny her husband his sexual rights. This supports Walby's (1990) idea of the patriarchal structure of sexuality and reinforces power dynamics within a family, which is concurrent to Connell's gender order. There is also clear pressure on women to conceive, reinforcing that an Acholi woman's role within society is to produce children, as children are a resource not only for women, as will be discussed in Chapter Six, but also for men. It is the producing of children that will facilitate a woman

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war. However, from my observations and from what I learned whilst in the field, the chiefs are still very well respected, especially by people who live in remote villages.

with conforming to her role within the gender hierarchy. Rwot Moses did not make any specific reference to the importance of the sex of the children. However, as I will discuss in Chapter Seven, in the village context it is important that married women provided their husbands with male children. There are several references to the importance of a woman's labour and how she should work hard, not only so that she can produce food for the family, but also to look after the children. It is these assertions that support the patriarchal ideologies of the subordination and repression of women. These assertions also demonstrate that women in the village contexts are compelled to conform to the gendered order and that there are also clearly defined divisions of labour. In my opinion, Rwot Moses gives more attention to the role of married women in the process of food production and preparation, this supporting that women in SSA do far more work than their male counterparts (Bryceson, 1995). Even if it appears unjust that women carry the burden of crop production and childcare, these are roles that women, especially married women, must embrace, as they are roles that are socially grounded and accepted by both men and women. Women do have the choice to refuse these roles. However, what are the alternatives in agrarian societies where poverty is a daily problem and where options for women are limited or non-existent? Also, as already noted, being married brings a sense of pride and achievement to many women. Conforming to the gender order and patriarchal ideologies it would appear is a trade-off worth making. In doing so it shows that women are able to choose and to exert a certain level and degree of agency (Sen, 1985; Kabeer, 1999). Rwot Moses's statement confirms that women are there to serve and support men. For the sentiments of the chiefs to be heard it is the responsibility not only of mothers to inform their female children what is expected of them when they marry, but also of other female members of the community. This echoes arguments by Lerner (1986) and Sen (1990) that patriarchal practices can only be upheld if they are also supported by women themselves.

Besides interviewing Rwot Moses, I was also introduced to the female representative for the Twero clan. What became apparent during the interview

is that, not only is it men who have control over a woman's agency, but also other women, especially those who are already married into the clan which newly married women will be joining. In the case of the Twero clan, a newly married woman, prior to moving onto the lands of their husbands, must first meet with the female representative of the clan, in this instance, Alice. It is her job as the female representative to inform new wives of what is expected of them when leaving their ancestral land and birth clan and becoming a member of their husband's clan.<sup>143</sup> For me this supports the argument that it is women who are also responsible for reinforcing the patriarchal ideologies of the male members of their clan (Sen, 1990). It is quite clear from the following quotation that there are high expectations on women to perform too and to conform to their given gendered roles within the Twero clan.

*Alice: "before getting involved, actually going to your new home, you need to first come to me so that I can tell you what the dos and don'ts are of the Twero clan. I will tell you what you need to do and what you shouldn't do. The rules, I explain them. I tell the women what they should do as Twero women. I also tell them that they need to respect their husbands... Respect means doing whatever your husband asks you to do."*

As noted, what Alice does is another way of supporting and reinforcing the gender roles of women within the family and household. What she does definitely supports and reinforces the patriarchal ideologies of her adopted clan. However, another way to interpret what Alice does is to see it as that she is actually preparing women for the transition from one clan to another. Even if the clans are similar in nature, they are by no means homogeneous entities. It is this advanced insight into the adoptive clan's traditions and also to their expectations that will help women to adjust. She is in effect supporting new female members of the clan and empowering them, (within patriarchal boundaries) since if new women make 'mistakes' early in a marriage it could

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<sup>143</sup> I was only able to interview one female representative who is responsible for teaching new women how they should conduct themselves when joining their new clan, this being the female representative for my adopted clan, the Twero clan.



have serious consequences for them that may leave them vulnerable.<sup>144</sup> I would argue that Alice, in her own way, protecting newcomers. She is in a position to do this because as an already established member of the Twero clan she is more than aware of how the transition from one clan to another can be. She is also aware of how a woman's life changes when she goes from being unmarried to married. As a point of reference there is no such indoctrination for married men. Lessons and instructions are only given to women, an indication of the patriarchal framework as proposed by (Walby 1990).

It is not only the chiefs who dictate what married women should do and how they should behave, or female representatives, but it is also the job of the husband to instil how a woman should behave.

Ben *"Women should be respectful; normally you give women lessons, you give them lessons on how to be respectful. That is what I did."*

Women are clearly taught how they should behave from a young age. It is conforming to the prescribed behavioural patterns associated with femininities that allows women to conform to and 'respect' socially constructed gender relations. In relation to respect, it would appear that respect is simply another word for subordination. For a man to expect his wife to do everything that he says without question is not respect; it is conforming and obeying rules and traditions that are designed and reinforced by men. But for this to be effective it requires the complicity of both men and women. I would argue that it is knowing your place and working hard that will make a woman a successful wife. If women do challenge the gender order and the patriarchal ideologies of their adoptive clan then they will be viewed as an unsuitable member. Not only will women bring shame on themselves, but also on their ancestral family. Also, as I will discuss in Chapter Seven, if a woman does not perform well, if she is not successful in providing enough foodstuffs for her children and her husband, she will be classified as being 'lazy' and she will have failed in one of her roles

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<sup>144</sup> It is highly unlikely that a marriage will end because of mistakes made by a new wife, as separation and divorce are frowned upon. However, as it is socially accepted for men to have girlfriends and, of course, more than one wife, they may be tempted to stray.

within the family.<sup>145</sup> The consequence of this could be that she could find herself without a home, without her children and also without land.

#### 5.2.4 Working hard and knowing one's place

The requirements for married women to work hard in their gardens cannot be underestimated. If married women do not work productively, then, regardless if their husband is permanently at home or not, there will be negative consequences for the household as a whole; as it is the labour of women that keeps a home together and brings prosperity. This is a sentiment that is supported by the former LC5 and echoed by Rwot Moses.

LC5: *"Women work much harder than men. It is the woman who keeps the household together. It is the woman who is the strength to the family. A family cannot do well unless there is a strong, hard working woman."*

Rwot Moses: *"A house cannot do well unless there is a woman who works hard, a woman who is not lazy. A household can have a lazy man and there are many, but not a lazy woman as the household will suffer. The children will suffer and there will be no food for the children. The gardens will suffer. Women are very important in our culture. We need them to work."*

There are several things that I find of interest here. Firstly, it is clear that even if men are the dominant sex owing to patriarchal ideologues, it is acknowledged that without a supportive woman in a household, a woman who works hard, a family will not be successful. It is this acknowledgment that demonstrates that men in the context of the village are in effect dependent on their wives for their food needs. However, even though this is the case, women are not viewed as being equal to their husbands as they are brought into the family. They will always be lower on the gender hierarchy and they are, as proposed by Kabeer (2012:11), *"the inferior bearers of labour."* That said, what

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<sup>145</sup> Climate change and a lack of resources appear not to be taken into consideration. Neither is having to care not only for your children, but also for your husband.

the LC5 does say, implies that women are actually afforded a certain level of respect. If women work hard they will be respected, though as I have noted, not seen as equal. Fundamentally though, a woman's role as a predominantly subsistence agricultural worker in the home environment it would appear, is a taken for granted social norm.

Peter: *"My wife, she is just there to use the land."*

To show how necessary women are, once a new-born baby is four days old, married women who have just given birth are expected to recommence household duties and also return to the gardens. As husbands do so little in the gardens, especially during the dry season, women may return so quickly after giving birth because they are aware that if they do not their crops may suffer, or they fear that the home will begin to be neglected. One such woman that I met was Odong, who I had already interviewed in an informal conversation. I stopped by her house as I was told that she had recently given birth. When I arrived I was surprised to see her already clearing her gardens in preparation for ploughing, as I knew she had only just given birth. When I asked her why she was already doing very demanding physical, manual labour, her response was, *"this is what we women in the village do. If we don't, who will work our gardens for us? My husband is not here, so it is up to me."*<sup>146</sup> A point that I would like to add is that women who are employed formally are legally entitled to maternity leave. Under Section 56, (1) of the 2006 Employment Act, "A female employee shall, as a consequence of pregnancy, have the right to a period of sixty working days leave from work on full wages (hereafter referred to as "maternity leave,") of which at least four weeks shall follow childbirth or miscarriage."

However, women who are subsistence farmers are entitled to nothing as the work that they do is not classified as work, as it is work that is taken for granted

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<sup>146</sup> Odong is a part of a de jure household. She is married formally; however, not only does her husband work away from home, but she is also a co-wife. As a woman who has given birth to two children, (both of which were relatively easy and uncomplicated labours) I am more than aware of the effects of giving birth. Just the thought of having to do such intensive activity is, quite frankly, terrifying. When I informed some of the women and men that in the UK we get up to a year off they were more than surprised.

and is also not paid. It could be argued that there are clear double standards between different types of women within Ugandan society.

Other than women feeling that they need to get back to work quickly because their gardens need attending to, owing to the gendered divisions of labour, men are not taught how to cook, nor are they socially expected to take care of their children as this is seen as a woman's responsibility. Some men are incapable of taking care of their children, as they are unable to prepare meals for them. Women simply do not have any real choice, especially if there are no other women around to help them. It is these roles as wives, mothers and agricultural workers that women openly accept, as noted by Judy Adoko,

*"It is work which men take for granted and women also step into without question."*

Women, step into their roles as mothers, wives and agricultural workers as this is what they have been taught to do and because there are no other options available to them. In addition, being married and being a mother, as I have already discussed, gives a woman status. Women who have children, but are not married, are not afforded the same respect socially as are married women, as they have not fulfilled one of their key roles, which is to be a wife.

### **5.2.5 The Gender Hierarchy**

Even if married women are expected to work hard for the needs of their children, their husbands and themselves, it is imperative that women never challenge the socially perceived perceptions that men are the heads of the household. They must openly accept their 'lower' position as it helps sustain harmony within the family environment. It is important that women do not challenge the gendered power dynamics. As discussed by the Sub-County chief for Adunu Parish,

*"When a woman gets more money than a man, this gives us many challenges; it challenges the family dynamics. It's not good for a woman to earn or to have more money than a man, than her husband. If a woman has more money than the man,*

*you find that they will criticise the man; they can belittle them because they are being fed by a woman. But if a woman has more money than a man it usually means that the man is not hard working, he may be lazy. It can make him feel inferior.”*

What is interesting about this quote is that it is already women who are responsible for feeding their husband's owing to the evident social divisions of labour, so if women do earn more money than men would there really be any change in family dynamics? Also, the Sub County Chief is implying that the only reason a woman does better than a man, especially in relation to generating a cash income, is if their husband is lazy. This implies that women can only be successful if their men are failures. It shows, a lack of respect for the position of women within the local context and also demonstrates that a woman's value is minimal.

If a woman were to challenge the gender relations within a family, as noted, the consequences could be very negative for the woman as ultimately, even if women are needed (and it is socially acknowledged that they are), they are still simply women and they are not true members of their husband's clan.

Simon: *“My wife is not my relative, she is not a member of my clan*

### **5.2.6 Compromises**

Women work hard on the ancestral lands of their husbands because it is socially accepted and expected that they do. They try their utmost to be good wives.<sup>147</sup> Not only do they work hard because they are aware that they are expected to fulfil their socially constructed gender roles but they also work hard

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<sup>147</sup> If a woman marries and she is not a productive wife then she will bring shame onto her family and may be sent back home. Whilst conducting my field work I was informed that several of the female members of my adoptive clan were unmarriageable as they were not classified as being ready to be good wives. The justifications given were that they were lazy and unable to cook. After having spent some time with one of the women who was classified as being lazy, I observed that this certainly was not the case. In the eyes of local women I am myself, a terrible Acholi wife.

because if they do not they are aware of what they will lose. This is something that was discussed by Angelina,

*“As a woman here in this village on my husband’s land I must work hard at the marriage because if I don’t he could chase me away, and I would lose my home and my children.”*

This is a sentiment that was also supported by Amwomy.

*“Yes, there is no doubt about that; women will put up with all kinds of behaviour from their husbands as no woman wants to leave her children...women try as much as possible to keep their children, to try to be good wives and good mothers. They try very hard. I would not want another woman to bring up my children, and seeing as men are not capable of bringing up children, then they always get another woman.”*

It is this loss that I propose is the main driving factor as to why women accept their subordinate position within the household.<sup>148</sup> However, it is a bargain that for many is worth making, as women do not want their children to be brought up by other women, nor do they want to be without them. Even if women do have to be good wives and put up with all kinds of negative and derogatory behaviour, being married gives them access to resources and assets, of which land is the prime resource. Land also facilitates a woman’s survival. It is this process of bargaining that echoes the work of Kandiyoti (1988;1999). This is not to say that women do not leave their husbands. They do, not as often as they are ‘chased’ away, but when a situation is serious then they will leave, even if this means that they will be forced to leave their children.<sup>149</sup>

One such woman that I met who temporarily left her husband was Ajalo. Margret left her husband for several reasons, two of which were that he was continuously having extra marital affairs and also he was not supporting Ajalo

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<sup>148</sup> Not only do women stay in marriages where they are expected to be subordinate because of a fear of losing their children, but they also stay in marriages because, one, marriage affords women respect and, two, the only real option open to women if they do not reside with a husband/man is to return or stay with their ancestral family. I met no women who lived independently from either their family or a man .

<sup>149</sup> Several of the women that I interviewed left their husbands due to domestic violence.

and the children financially, despite his being in salaried employment as a teacher. Leaving a husband because he is having affairs is usually not seen as being justifiable, as women are expected to turn a blind eye. However, owing to the prevalence of HIV and the non-usage of contraception, women need to be more proactive in looking after themselves and protecting their health. According to my respondents, even if HIV has decreased in the north of Uganda, it is still a reality for many and is present in the villages where I conducted my research. Even if Ajalo did leave her husband because of his unacceptable behaviour, during the time that I was in the villages, she went back to him. When I asked her why she had decided to go back to him after being separated for two years, she told me that she went back because she was finding it difficult being away from several of her children (only the younger ones went with her when she left her husband). What is important is that before Ajalo was allowed to return to her husband, her family requested to have a meeting with her husband and his family. In relation to being allowed, this supports the theory that women who return to their ancestral lands are classified as being minors and that even if they are classified as being FHH as they have their own homes and access to land, it becomes the generational patriarch who has the final say in their lives. During the course of the meeting it was decided by Ajalo's family, (of which an uncle had the ultimate say) that she could only return to her husband if all of the remaining bridewealth that was still outstanding was paid and that he tested negative for HIV. I am not sure if he tested HIV negative; I am though aware that some, (not all of the bridewealth), was paid to her family. What I find intriguing about Ajalo's situation is that even if she has had six children with her husband and been in a marital relationship with him for at least fourteen years, her family still wanted the remaining bridewealth to be paid. Not only does this support the importance of bridewealth, but it also shows that a woman's needs are secondary and that traditional formalities take precedence. However, the fact that not all of the remaining bridewealth was paid does demonstrate that Ajalo was in a position to bargain with her family. I asked her brother, Ben, what would happen if she chose once again to leave her husband. He informed me that even if they as a family do have enough land for her that she would not

be openly welcome as the family along with her had made the decision to return to her husband.

### 5.3 Married women and Land

Having given an overview of the importance of not only bridewealth and marriage in the context of the villages and demonstrated what women have to do so that they are classified as being good wives, and having given the reasons why they will accept a subordinate position to men within the home and Acholi society as a whole, I will now focus my attention on married women and land.

As discussed in the previous section, several of the women whom I interviewed believe that husbands have control over them because of prevailing traditional practices, of which moving onto the land of their husband's family is one. However, this does not mean that women have neither agency nor control over land. Neither does it mean that they see themselves as merely guests on the lands of their husbands. As with the data that is presented in Chapter Four from studies conducted by Doss et al. (2011) and Burke and Kobusingye (2014), women believe that not only can they freely access and derive benefit from customary land, but also that they have secure rights to the land and that they can also inherit the land.<sup>150</sup> The defining factor in being able to have rights to land and control over the land is, as noted previously, marriage. It is marriage that gives a woman legitimate access to the land. This is a sentiment that is supported not only by men, but also by women.

*Akello: "For me I know traditionally if I am married that I should now have ownership over the land and that I can inherit the land."*

*Rachel: "He picked me from my father's home. So now that he has picked me, I belong to this land and this land belongs*

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<sup>150</sup> Inheritance can either be upon the death of a husband, or when a husband and wife are assigned land from the head of the family. This, as discussed, is usually the father of the husband.



*to me. If he didn't want me, he should have left me on my father's land. He married me, so for me I should and do have control of this land."*

*Paul: "Definitely, a woman once married becomes a member of the family permanently and has a right over the land."*

Rights to the land and inheritance are two very distinct things. Inheritance, in the above context, refers to inheritance upon the death of a husband. In this instance traditional inheritance means that a widow is entitled to inherit all of the land of her husband at least until her male children are old enough to be given some of the their father's lands. I will refer back to inheritance upon death in Chapter Six as there are several contradictions between traditional inheritance practices and those that are prescribed and supported by the patriarchal state.

Ownership, rights and control are assumed because they as women have been married. It is almost a given assumption that marriage gives a woman this level of security among the Acholi. It is a taken-for-granted social norm supported by traditional practices and also, as observed, evident in the PPCT.

And, as proposed by Judy Adoko,

*"If a husband tried to sell the land or take the land, then she, the woman would fight for it. So, whoever says that women do not own land should explain why women fight so hard, because, if custom did not allow them, they should have accepted it by now and not fought. But, the fact that she would go to court, that she would go to the clan, you know, come to complain, means that she knows that she has rights."*

It is these assumptions that echo the work of Whitehead and Tsikata (2003) who propose that women are able to make strong claims to customary land , as it is socially embedded. When I asked women if they would fight for their lands if they felt that their rights were being abused by their husbands, all of them said, yes they would fight for what they know to be theirs. This was specifically relevant if a husband tried to sell land without the permission of the

wife. However, as I have already said, very few people in the villages actually buy or sell land so this type of questioning was hypothetical. However, as noted in Chapter Four, there is evidence that women, especially those who are widows, do fight for their husband's lands.

However, not all women are of the opinion that they have rights to and control over the land, as discussed by Sylvia.

*“For me as a woman, my role was as a wife to move to my husband's land. Traditional lands are lands that I don't have any right to as they are my husband's lands.”*

This is a sentiment that was also supported by the representative for the ULA in Pader.<sup>151</sup> *“Lots of married women do not think that they can and should inherit land.”*

For those married women who do not think that they can inherit land, this is simply a question of not having the right knowledge as every woman under Acholi customary practices is theoretically entitled to inherit and or access land, though this is usually when the generational patriarch is still alive. As Judy Adoko noted:

*“Inheritance also comes through marriage. So, when the land is given to the son, it is actually given to the son and his wife. That is when the allocation for future generations comes in.... in the customary system it happens when allocation of land is made. So, as a wife, as an unmarried woman, as a divorced woman, and so for me, inheritance is not only to the sons; it is to a son, a married girl, a divorced woman and a wife.”*

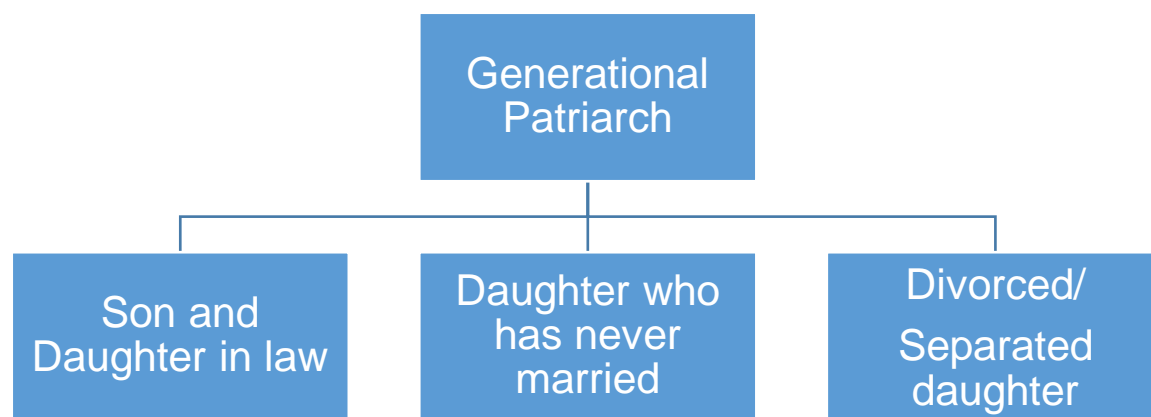
Diagram One shows the traditional inheritance practices whilst the generational patriarch (the custodian of the land) is still alive. Not only are sons given land, but also the female members of the family if they are not married. However, even if this is the case, and people such as Judy Adoko assert that all women have rights, in practice in many instances this is not the case, and

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<sup>151</sup> The ULA are an NGO based in Kampala, but with a regional office in Pader. They work exclusively on issues that pertain to land. See <http://ulaug.org/>

very complex issues with numerous factors are in play, as I will discuss throughout the data chapters.

Figure Three. Traditional Inheritance Practices whilst the Generational Patriarch is still alive.



The exception to this is widowed women, as widows are to be afforded continued access to the lands of their husband, so in theory they should not need to inherit land from the generational patriarch as they should already have inherited the land of their late husband. However, as I will discuss, this is not always the case as widows, if they are faced with problems on the lands of their late husband's, will have no other option than to return to their father's land.

With regards to women not needing to inherit land, this is something very different altogether and is intrinsically linked to gender relations and cultural norms that see women overlooked for the sake of the male members within a clan. Women are, after all, expected to leave the lands of the ancestral patriarch and marry, so in essence there should never be any real need for them to inherit, (that is unless they are widows), as they should be with their husbands. As noted, a woman's role in life is to marry and have children. Why would she remain at home? Her remaining at home deprives the male

members not only of a source of bridewealth, but also of land, as ultimately the size of land that they will have access to will be smaller as they will have been obliged by the generational patriarch to share with their sisters.

Even if there are those, such as Judy Adoko, who believe that women, regardless of their marital status, will inherit land, women themselves, especially married women, see no reason why their daughters should inherit land from their fathers and ultimately they as mothers. The following discussion demonstrates this.

### **5.3.1 Pragmatism or reinforcing gender inequality?**

Several of the married women that I talked to were all in support of continuing patrilineal inheritance, thus facilitating the practice of patriarchy, as proposed by Lerner (1986).

*Akello: "For my girls who will marry and go away, they should not be given land from their father. If marriage doesn't work then they should be given land here at home."*

*Agnes: "If my daughter marries and leaves our home, then no, she shouldn't get any of this land as she will get a share of land from her husband."*

*Rachel: "Girls don't need land, well not the land where they are born as they'll get land from their husband's family when they marry."*

From the quotes above, it could be concluded that women are themselves not supporting, nor advocating equality in relation to women's access to and retention of lands, as stipulated in the Ugandan Constitution and Land Act. And, that it is also some women who are continuing to support the patriarchal cycle of lineage inheritance and land access, and who are reinforcing the socially accepted practice that women are in transit. However, I suggest that there are two possible reasons as to why the women that I interviewed in the

villages support the continuation of patrilineal access to land.<sup>152</sup> Firstly, it would be easy, on the one hand, from a feminist perspective, to say that the married women that I interviewed were simply not aware of their rights or that they were not able to think outside of the normative social systems in which they reside. However, not allowing married women to reside upon, access or inherit the lands of their fathers has very practical reasons. If married daughters continue to reside upon the lands of their father's with their husbands, this could destabilise the social equilibrium and the power dynamics between men and women, as the males of the family and their families could find themselves in a vulnerable position. As it is very difficult for people to buy land in the village, people need to be mobile and, unfortunately, in a patriarchal society this means women, people have to relocate. Other than this, it is also important socially to keep the land in the family of the men. Ancestral lands must not be tampered with. Primarily, it is taken as given that women will get land from their husbands as not only they, but also men, are expected to marry. As I have already discussed in this chapter, if women are not married in the village, they are seen as being a minor and they have not fulfilled their role as either a wife or as a woman. It is only non-married women who (as noted by Akello), should have access to the lands of their fathers. After all, a married woman cannot be expected to work on both the lands of her father and on the land of her husband. Thus it makes sense for the sons and their wives to use the land.

The issue of married female children accessing and inheriting land from their fathers was discussed at length, not only with women and men in the villages, but also with local elites, NGO representatives and civil servants. The overriding opinion of those from outside the villages that I talked to, both formally and informally, (especially those from NGOs) about this issue was that the women themselves need to be 'sensitised' to their rights. Uganda after all does have a constitution that supports equal land inheritance for all, be this for male or female children. However, those who do not reside in the villages, overlook what women actually want and what they themselves see as being

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<sup>152</sup> This is not to say that there could not be others. However, for the purpose of this thesis, focus is given to the two that I have mentioned.

important. Is it the ability to access both the lands of their fathers and husbands or is there something more important at stake? Also is it really important who owns the land, or who has control over the land as long as women have access and an element of control.

In a discussion with Aajok, it became clear that what is important for her was not who owns the land, or if women inherit land, but it is what women do with the land that they have access to.

Lisa: *“Do you not feel like the owner of the land, or the co-owner seeing as you have been on the land for 40 years?”*

Aajok: *“Me, I just cultivate the land, the ownership is on him, that has nothing to do with me as I’m just a woman.”*

Lisa: *“How do you feel about that?”*

Aajok: *“The output of the land is what we eat, but the ownership is on the man.”*

Lisa: *“So for you, it’s not really an issue that you don’t have ownership?”*

Aajok: *“No, food is what’s important.”*

Aajok openly accepts the fact that she is simply a woman, thus implying that she is subordinate not only to her husband, but also to other men and that she does not have the same rights to her husband’s land as he does. However, she is aware of what is actually in reality of importance, i.e. food. When women live in a low commercial output farming community that practices patrilineal inheritance it is practicalities that are of importance. This is not to say that women like Aajok would not like to be classified as being co-owners, as the data above shows. However, when push comes to shove, it’s about what women do with the land that is of more relevance. This is also supported by Akello:

*“For me, what is important is that I have somewhere to live and somewhere to grow crops for myself and my family. Who owns the land is of no interest to me.”*

As noted previously, Akello is aware that she traditionally owns the land of her husband insofar as she has secure access because she is married. However, as the above quote shows, at the end of the day, it is actually irrelevant who owns the land, as providing enough food is what in reality counts. This is a reality that appears to have been missed, not only by the NGO community, but also by external donors and gender activists.

#### **5.4 Freehold and married women**

In the villages, the buying and selling of land is something that does not happen on a frequent basis as most people at the moment have enough land for themselves and for their families. However, as the populations of the villages begin to increase there is an increasing likelihood that this is something that will change as pressures will be placed on the land due to population growth. Also with increasing families, come increasing pressures on already precious economic resources. Not only this, but families at the moment are reluctant to sell their land as they are aware of how important it is to have enough land, not only for themselves, but also for future generations. After all, without land, a farmer, regardless of their sex, has no way of supporting themselves and their families, especially in the rural areas of the Acholi region. However, there are those who have both sold and bought land, this is even if theoretically customary land should not be sold.

As land that is bought is no longer classified as being customary land, I was interested to know how this land would be managed and who would have the ultimate control.

When I talked to George, the elected head of the Twero clan, about buying land and how it would be registered it became clear that patriarchal social practices of power over resources were and still are the socially accepted norm, even if the land tenure system is not customary.

*“It is in my name, not in the name of the family, not in my wives’ names. It is written in the name of the head of the family, which is, of course, me.”*

George's comment was no real surprise, owing to the patriarchal norms within the villages and within the clan structures as a whole. What, though, was interesting to know was that the money that George used to buy the land actually came from one of his wives.<sup>153</sup> George's first wife is a member of a village savings co-operative, and it is there where she acquired the money so that George could buy two acres of farming land. As George is away teaching in another area in the north, it is her responsibility to work the land, although she does not co-own the land. It is also her responsibility to repay the loan. Other than the justification given that he, as the head, should be the only one on the land certificate; it was explained to me that even if the land that was bought was no longer classified as being traditional lands, the freehold land would still be managed in the same traditional way as the rest of the land that he has. This is even if it does not fall under customary law, but state policies that pertain to land. This means that his daughters would not be eligible to access the bought land nor to inherit it unless they were divorced, separated or single. In effect, this supports the notion that the LTS in the villages is of no consequence, as all land, be it traditional, leasehold or freehold, will be managed and governed in the same way. So, inheritance will still be mandatory and women will be afforded access rights, but not full legally recognised rights as per law.<sup>154</sup>

### **5.5 Independent ownership**

There are several programmes being implemented in the north of the country by the Government and NGOs that are actively encouraging married women to buy their own land.<sup>155</sup> The logic behind encouraging women to buy their own land is that it is believed that it will give women greater independence from the conjugal patriarch and more land tenure security. In principle it could make sense; after all, as noted in Chapter Two, there is evidence to suggest that if women own their own land, not only does it benefit them but it also benefits their children. As I have argued, however, this is not always the case, as

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<sup>153</sup> Michael has three wives, of various ages.

<sup>154</sup> Customary land, as noted in Chapter Four, is governed differently to the other land tenure systems that are evident in Uganda.

<sup>155</sup> I was informed of this by Regina, the Gender Communication and Development Officer for Agago, during our interview.



having land alone will not necessarily mean that women and their children will benefit, especially if they lack other vital resources. Another point is, how much is enough land so that women can be independent from the husband? Even if there are programmes being implemented, as discussed by Regina the Gender Communication and Development Officer for Agaoa,<sup>156</sup>

*“It’s not practically possible for a female subsistence farmer to buy land... They can’t, they can’t own land.”*

The reason given that married subsistence farmers cannot buy land is that in the villages married women are simply too poor. Not only this, but a valid question to ask is, in an area of the country where up to 99% of the land is customary, where would married women buy land and who from? I did ask Regina who these programmes were supposed to target and she informed me that the programmes were aimed more at elite women in salaried employment who reside in urban areas. This, once again, I believe confirms and reinforces that elite women are in a much stronger position than female subsistence farmers and that the Government do not have their interests in mind.

Not only are married women not in a position to buy land in their own right due to a lack of resources (in the village a plot of land, enough for a home and a small garden, although not large enough for the sustainable needs of a family, costs Ugandan Shillings 320,000).<sup>157</sup> If married women were to buy land independently with their own money they would not negate their husbands on the land title document, thus the land would be co-owned, as discussed by Paul.

*“The only problem might be if you have a husband and you try to buy the land without involving your husband that could then cause some problems. Or a husband might question why you would want to buy land? They might think that you are planning to leave them, or that you are no good as a wife. With that tension will be created and domestic violence will happen.”*

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<sup>156</sup> The position of Gender, Communication and Development Officer for Agago is a civil servant governmental position.

<sup>157</sup> 320,000 Ugandan Shillings is the equivalent to £80.

*You need to buy as one, because you are united as one, now why would you separate on land issues? It should be done together.”*

From Paul's statement it is clear that if a married woman did buy land independently of her husband she would be seen as destabilising the social equilibrium and challenging gender relations and gender roles. Not only this, but she could be leaving herself open to abuse and harm. Also, if women do buy land independently of their husbands there is no guarantee that they will actually be more secure. As Grace stated,

*“My husband would say that I've gotten the money for buying my land due to working on his land so I should go back to my father's home as I have no rights to the land that I'd bought.”*

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This is a sentiment that confirms the opinions of Rwot Levi, insofar as whatever a woman produces is the property of the conjugal patriarch. If this is the case, then even if the Government are advocating that wives should buy land independently of husbands, a valid question to ask is, is there any real benefit in doing so in practice? From the evidence presented here, even if married women were in a position to buy land, the land would need to be registered jointly, or, as the example given by George shows, by the head of the household, which is the conjugal patriarch. Also, if married women do buy land independently, how are they expected to work not only the gardens of the family, but also their own land? Married women after all, already have demanding workloads. In relation to distorting the social equilibrium, even in the Global North women do not often buy homes independently of their husbands, so why is it seen as being appropriate in the Developing South, especially in rigid patriarchal societies where woman's options are limited. I am inclined to argue that even if the Government and NGOs are advocating for independent ownership of land for married women that they have misunderstood the realities on the ground and that gender empowerment and

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<sup>158</sup> Rose and her husband bought several acres of land near to their homestead a few years ago.

equality cannot be achieved by pitting women against men. Also in choosing not to buy land, married women are actively demonstrating a level of agency insofar as they are aware of the negative connotations that may follow if they challenge the patriarch's authority, so it is easier to continue to work on the land of the conjugal patriarch. Also, another key issue that NGOs and the Government have missed is that socially women are aware that the land of their husbands is also theirs because bridewealth has been paid. It is the payment of bridewealth that gives security of access.

The purpose of this section was to show how married women access and continue to retain access to the ancestral lands of their husbands. It clearly demonstrated that if bridewealth has been paid, women are aware that the land is not only theirs, but that they can inherit the land upon the death of their husbands. Not only this, but in relation to the purchasing of land, it is clear that women will not challenge the conjugal patriarch's authority, and that they embrace their supportive role. This is also demonstrated in the fact that women see no reason why their daughters should inherit land as ultimately they should marry. After all, that is what they as mothers have done.

## **5.6 Married women and household food security**

As noted above, for several women that I interviewed in the villages, what is actually of importance is not who owns and or controls the land, but rather what one does with the land, as it is the land that provides food and also sustains women and men financially. With this in mind, the following discussion is concerned with how both married women, (be these married women who reside in monogamous or polygamous marriages or women who live in *de jure* households), and married men define food security.<sup>159</sup> It also addresses what one needs to do to be food secure and also what influences a household's food security. It shows that the composition of the marital household can influence a married woman's food security both negatively and

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<sup>159</sup> "Women in *de jure* households" refers to women who are married in the traditional sense, though their husbands spend most of the time away from the family home.

positively. It is a discussion that clearly shows that the working definition of what food security is, as proposed at the World Food Summit in 1996 and used by FAO and others as referred to in Chapter Two, is not easily transferable to the villages where I conducted my research. Most importantly though, even if women assume a submissive role within the household, it is clear from my data that Acholi women do have some power when it comes to food production and that it is they who have control over the crops that are produced for household food consumption. Not only this, but food is distributed equally within households.

### 5.6.1 The importance and relevance of quantity and staples

When asking people what they perceived food security to be, there was a resounding agreement among both married women and men that food security is intrinsically related to not only what people have in the house, but, more specifically, to the quantity of staples held.<sup>160</sup>

Agnes: *“You can only be food secure if you have what to eat in the house.”*

Table Nine. Indicates what foods and the quantities of food are needed so that one can be food secure.

Crop	Quantity
Beans	2 sacks
Groundnut	3 sacks
Cassava	Always in the garden
Sim-Sim (sesame seeds)	2 sacks
Sorghum	3 sacks
Peas	2 sacks

Table Nine. Crop and Quantity

All of the foods in Table Nine are classified as being staple crops. They are the crops that the majority of families need to have in the house if they are to be food secure. Crops such as cabbages and tomatoes are only eaten to augment the local diet. Very few people that I talked to in the villages actually

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<sup>160</sup> See Appendix Seven for a detailed overview of what crops are grown and what crops are classified as being staple crops.

grow these crops, either for household food consumption or as cash crops. The justification being, as discussed by Akello,

*“You can’t grow cabbages on a large scale, as they go bad....Cabbage for me won’t buy cassava, but selling cassava would buy cabbage. Having cassava in the garden is far more important than having cabbage.”<sup>161</sup>*

It is clear from what Akello has said that people make choices as to what should be grown in their gardens. Yes, cabbages may have a certain nutritional value; however they do not last as long as other crops and also they have minimal calorific value. As food production is intrinsically linked to an individual’s labour, the time spent in the gardens needs to be as beneficial as possible as the products of a woman’s labour need to be able to sustain not only her but also her husband and her family for a year. Also selling cassava in the market, if needed, will generate more income than selling cabbages. Not only this, but as noted by Festo:

*“When we eat staple foods, we feel happy. Do you think we can feel happy if we eat just cabbage?”*

If both women and men do not have access to staples, then as subsistence farmers they will not be able to sustain their household’s food needs. As it is a woman’s responsibility to make sure that there is enough to eat within a home, a woman will be failing one of her socially defined gender roles if she does not do this. Thus another justification as to why emphasis is given to staple crops and not to fresh vegetables. Not only is it staples that provide people with enough to eat; producing enough staples is vital also for their economic needs, owing to the limited options of employment that are available in the villages. This is something that was supported by Samuel :

*“To be food secure actually means that you have enough to eat, and then excess to sell, then you will be safe. But even if*

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<sup>161</sup> In relation to cabbage, cabbages are often brought from Lira and even Gulu. Local women then buy them and sell them at markets.

*you have enough to eat, but you don't have the excess, that will mean that you will be compelled to sell some of your crops so that you can get some little money. There must be enough to eat and then enough to sell. That will give you the right balance."*

What I find interesting about the quote from Samuel is the issue of balance, and that it is important to produce more than you will need for your family. Foodstuff, even if there is just enough for the family's needs, are often sold when school fees need to be paid. Other than this, people need to make money so that they can buy essentials, such as oil, soap and salt. This, as I will discuss in Chapter Seven, is specifically relevant in FHH.

It is clear from the data that is presented above that the working definition of what food security is, *"Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for a healthy and active life,"* (World Food Summit, 1996) is, as noted, not easily transferable to the villages where I conducted my research. Yes, both married men and women may be able to live active lives, but as to their being healthy, this is open to much debate.<sup>162</sup> With regards to access, most married households do not have access to other foodstuffs at all times of the year as economic resources are lacking. With this in mind, a question that I will now look at is, "what influences a household's food security?"

### **5.6.2 Factors that influence a household's food security**

Other than having access to land, what became apparent from the interviews and focus groups that I conducted with both married women and men in villages, was that, not only did one need access to land, but that the following are also important: planning, an individual's capacity, the number of adults who work in the gardens, farming tools and equipment and climate.<sup>163</sup> Also, lastly, as proposed by Judy Adoko, there is respect for the crops that are

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<sup>162</sup> I say this, as whilst I was conducting my field work I lived on a very basic local diet. I lost a great deal of weight and upon returning to the UK was informed by my doctor that my diet whilst in Uganda was nutritionally imbalanced. I mainly ate rice, beans and cabbage and also Ugali, a food that is produced using maize flour.

<sup>163</sup> I am aware that people do not need to have access to land to be food secure as if they have enough cash income then they can buy all of the foods that they will need. However, in the context of the villages, it is the norm that people will produce their own food.

produced. A household may be classified as being food secure as there is enough to eat for the whole of the year and there is also a surplus so that one can sell at the market. However, a household's food security can be jeopardised if there is a mismanagement of the crops that have been produced and if abuses occur within the family unit.

Judy Adoko: *"Usually it is the strong people, the men who would then steal the food and I use the word steal because it is not custom to take the food; they steal the food to sell, they steal to do the wrong things."*

This is not something that I saw first-hand nor is it something that came through in the formal interviews that I conducted. However, when talking to people informally it is something that can and has happened to married women within the villages. Men will steal some of the excess crops and use the money that they make from the selling of these crops to buy alcohol and also to entertain their girlfriends. It would appear that these men see it as their right as the conjugal patriarch to do so, though they negate the consequences of their actions.

### **5.6.3 The importance of planning**

In relation to planning, it would appear that the process of planning is of paramount importance for all of those who live in the villages, regardless if one is married or not. However, planning is of specific importance for those women who are classified as being co-wives and whose husbands live in the villages, as it is these women who are required to share the labour of their husbands with another woman, even if, as discussed previously, it is women who do nearly all of the work in the gardens.<sup>164</sup> Socially it is men who are responsible for ploughing the gardens and also for digging the gardens if there is only a hand hoe available.<sup>165</sup> Thus the labour of a man, albeit limited, is actually

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<sup>164</sup> I talked to several men who were polygamous but did not reside permanently in the villages. These men were employed as either civil servants or teachers. It is these men who have one wife who resides in the village and another with them at their work station.

<sup>165</sup> During my time in the villages I never saw a woman using a plough. I did though observe both men and women digging together in their gardens.

important for crop production. The relevance of good planning when one is a co-wife is discussed by Adogn Paula.

*“You, as a woman need to plan what to do. So if my husband is with me for five days, then he’ll work with me for five days. If I haven’t planned in advance what we’ll be doing, then things will not get done.”*

What is of interest with this quote is that not only is the process of planning important, but also that it is the woman’s responsibility to plan and to be organised rather than their husband’s. It clearly shows that women, especially Adgon Paula, have some power within their homes and that it is they who are in the position to influence the process of food production. I asked Adgon Paula if she thought that her having to share her husband was problematic to her food security. She was resigned to that; that is what life is about. I would like to propose that women in polygamous unions at key times of the farming season could almost be classified as either being FFH or de jure households as the labour of their spouse is divided. If there are no resources available to hire men to plough the gardens and there is only a hand hoe available, then those women in polygamous unions will be faced with the same difficulties as those women who are on their own. Even if Adgon Paula is resigned to her family situation, the fact that she has the freedom to decide what to produce and to plan was a positive thing. It also shows that the patriarch does not have full control over her agency. What Adgon Paula found difficult, as did other women that I interviewed who are co-wives, was the fact that when there is more than one wife the plot size that one has access to decreases. The problem is, even if the land that a woman has access to decreases, women are still expected to produce the same quantities of food stuffs, as if they do not, they will not be fulfilling their gendered role as food producer. As previously discussed, if a woman fails in one of her roles, she could be classified as being an unsuitable wife and could risk her place within the household.

As I was in the villages during the dry season and the beginning of the rainy season, (this being, as noted in Chapter Four, between late December and



April 2014) I was in a fortunate position to observe how various families were prepared and organised for the onset of the first rains. There were several families who were clearly still in the mind frame of the dry season, (insofar as the amount of work that men do goes from minimal to nothing) especially those where there was a conjugal patriarch. On more than one occasion I saw large groups of men still relaxing and drinking under trees or drinking and playing cards at the local bars when the land was ready to be cleared and then subsequently ploughed. I would argue that those men who are in conjugal unions are more likely to take a relaxed view to the clearing of their gardens and the subsequent digging, as ultimately they know that their wives will do the work as if they do not, their wives will not be fulfilling their socially constructed gender roles, and neither will they be able to feed themselves and their children. This supports what Rwot Moses said about the fact that a home can have a lazy man, but not a lazy wife.

Also, as noted by Samuel , *“men, well they can be lazy and they drink, they think more about leisure time than they do to work, they don’t concentrate.”*

This is further supported by Ben Layo:

*“Planning is important, you need to be ready, and your garden needs to be ready. There are too many people who are now lazy, they sit and drink under the trees, and their gardens are not ready. The dry season just seems to go on and on. If you don’t plan then you will have a poor harvest.”*

As I was not able to spend a full season in the field I am not able to say if this had an impact on this year’s food production. However, those who were ready for the rains were definitely at an advantage as the crops were planted on time.

Not only is planning important, but so too are the capacities of the individual and the resources that a family has access to. For a household to do well, it is also believed that there needs to be two very hardworking adults in the

household, of which a wife is one. If women are on their own and have small children and no help, then they are the most vulnerable of married women.

#### **5.6.4 Teamwork**

Other than effective planning, working as a team was also something that was seen as being important.

Okech: *“If you are to work hard as an individual in the garden it is not good. But, if you have a woman next to you, a woman who can support you, it gives you motivation so that you will work hard in the garden.”*

This is a sentiment that is also supported by Ben Layo:

*“A good farm needs two very hard working people, that is what you need.”*

Throughout this chapter, women have been portrayed as being submissive to men. Not only this, but it would also seem that they are taken for granted. However, from these two statements, it would appear that married men are more than aware of the importance of a wife and that it is their labour that is responsible for the success that they may have in the garden. It is also these two statements that show that not all men are lazy and unproductive in their gardens. That said, for a married couple to do well they need to have the right resources, access to equipment and also good climatic conditions.

#### **5.6.5 Oxen or hoe?**

In relation to equipment, the most important piece of equipment that people need access to are oxen, as oxen, as noted by Holden et al. (2001) can increase crop production. In the village context this was discussed by Okech.

*“When you are using a hand held hoe, first of all it takes time, it takes a lot of time for you to plough the garden. The hoe also doesn’t go deep in the ground, so the crop may, well it will be less as it is not planted deep enough.”*

Whilst in the field I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity not only to use a hoe, but also to use a plough.<sup>166</sup> The difference in the time that it takes to plough a garden or dig a garden is considerable. An acre of garden can be ploughed in maximum two days, whereas if one is to dig it can take at least two weeks owing to the intensity of the work, even if there are two healthy people digging. A plough, on the other hand, requires only one man if the oxen are already trained to plough.

#### **5.6.6 Climate Change**

The issue of climate and a changing climate was brought up frequently when discussing what one needs so that people can be food secure. It is clear that the residents of the villages have been negatively influenced by climate change. This applies to both poor farmers and also to the few elite farmers who reside in the villages. Owing to floods and drought in 2013 the harvest for that year was reduced for many people. Three of the crops that did not do well were maize, groundnuts and sim-sim. Akello said,

*“The maize that I grew around the compound didn’t do well at all. It was the sunshine that made our crops to fail.”*

Sim-sim, as noted in Chapter Four, is a fundamental cash crop for those who reside in northern Uganda. If its production is affected negatively then the consequences can be catastrophic for people who rely on the crop as a source of income.

#### **5.6.7 The de jure household**

As already implied, the composition of a marital household may have an influence, not only on a woman’s food security, but also on all of the other members of the family. Not only does this apply to married women and married

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<sup>166</sup> Socially, as a woman, I should not have ploughed a garden using oxen. However, I was permitted to do so as I indicated that it was important to my research. The land where I ploughed also belongs to a relative of my husband.

co-wives, but it also applies to those who are classified as being in de jure marriages.<sup>167</sup>

One woman that I spent quite some time with was Akello. Akello's household is de jure as her husband does not live permanently with her as he is a primary school teacher in another area of the north of Uganda. He is only at home when there are school holidays.<sup>168</sup> What is interesting about Akello is that she has an abundance of land as she has access to at least 60 acres. So, for her land access is not a problem and neither is size as she is the only person who resides permanently on the ancestral lands of her husband. What makes Akello's situation different from other de jure households is that, unlike other women who I talked to whose husbands are away from the family home, the support that she receives from her husband is minimal. As a result of a lack of financial and physical support from her husband and due to having small children this has meant that last year her yield was small.

*"For us here, we need to grow a variety of crops and you need to cultivate these crops within two months. For me, who am alone, it is very hard. I just cannot manage."*

Even if Akello is married, she could easily be classified as being a FHH as she spends most of her time on her own. However, as she is married she is still expected to behave like a wife and to produce children, thus abide and conform to her gender roles. Akello already has two children with her husband, both girls. However, owing to her being only 30, it is socially accepted that she will have several more children. Ultimately, even if her husband does not live with her, it is he who as the conjugal patriarch who has the power. Whilst I was conducting my fieldwork, one of her husband's nephews came to assist Akello on the farm. His labour was needed because someone was required to plough the gardens. However, owing to financial difficulties in the family one of the oxen were sold. This left Akello with access to only one ox. For the gardens to be ploughed it required that she borrowed another ox from a relative of her

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<sup>167</sup> Those women who are classified as being in de jure marriages have husbands who are teachers who work away in schools in other areas of the North of Uganda.

<sup>168</sup> The longest school holiday for primary children in Uganda is from early December until late January, in the dry season. Children also have three weeks off in April-May and in August.

husband. Spending time with Akello gave me an insightful look into the life of a FHH. Looking after a toddler and a small baby and trying to run a small farm and also run a home, is both physically and emotionally demanding. One could be forgiven for not being able to produce enough staple foods.<sup>169</sup>

#### **5.6.8 Land sufficiency, resource poverty**

Another woman that I interviewed, Agnes, was also in a similar position to Akello. However, unlike Akello, her husband lives permanently with her. Like Akello, she too has access to a large portion of land and the land is only inhabited by one nuclear family (this being her, her husband and her three young children). However, they too have problems with food production.

*“Yes we have a lot of land, so that isn’t the problem. We don’t, though, have oxen. That is the problem. It is an issue of capacity. I also have small children.”*

What Agnes says supports the notion that for one to have enough food in the house, it is imperative that a family has the right resources and that both of the adults within the family are capable and able bodied and able to work effectively.

In relation to capacity and small children, being a woman on their own, even if they are married, is also discussed by the former LC5 of Pader.

*“If a woman is on her own she can only do so much. If she has young children and she is on her own she can do very little. When you are a woman on your own, it pays not to have the children with you as you cannot work as well.”*

Even if it is known that having small children can negatively influence a woman’s capacity to be effective in the gardens, they are still expected to keep producing children, which, as noted, is conducive to patriarchal ideologies, as discussed by both Walby (1990) and Connell (2005). This is an issue that I will refer to in Chapter Seven when discussing single women.

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<sup>169</sup> Grace has a daughter a few months older than my daughter, Amelie

## 5.7 Household food consumption

In relation to how food is distributed within the household, especially those households where there is both a husband and a wife, from the data that I have it would appear that there is no difference in how food is distributed. Lilli. *“it would be distributed equally between all members of the family.”* This is a sentiment that was repeated not only by other married women, but also by married men and elites. If anything, it is the female members of the household who actually have access to and consume more. I would like to propose that this is the case owing to the rigid gender divisions of labour that are evident within households in the villages. As noted above, all domestic work is done by women. This also includes the processing and preparation of food. Women in effect rule the kitchen, and it is they who have complete power and control over what is prepared.<sup>170</sup> Men socially only enter the kitchen if they require some water or if it is a cold evening. There may be disparities; however, in the context of where I conducted my research food was distributed equally.

In fact when I asked people how food was distributed within the household, many of the respondents were perplexed at such a question, as to them it was obvious that all members of the family had needs that needed to be met and that the sex of an individual was of no relevance. Rather it was their age that was of importance.

Even if married women and men do have equal access to foodstuffs, it would be presumptuous to conclude that there were no issues with food insecurity because there clearly are times during the year where people will be vulnerable to food shortages. Owing to the poor harvest of 2013, many people who I interviewed indicated that the food that they had would not be enough to last them the whole of 2014.

### 5.7.1 Control over the food crops

It is clear from the responses from several of the married women that I interviewed that they themselves perceive that they have the power over food

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<sup>170</sup> Men also do not wash up.

production and that it is they who are in a strong position of control. Culturally, even if the land that married women reside upon is that of the conjugal patriarch and his family, food crops are ultimately the domain of the women. As noted by Judy Adoko,

*“The truth is, food crops are the woman’s domain and she decides what to grow, she decides what to sell and what to keep. That is her domain.”*

This is a sentiment that was also supported by Okidi, a commercial farmer, a clan head and also a former high ranking government employee.

*“It is a woman who controls the foodstuffs. It is her who manages the granary. She is the one who cooks. She knows what a family will need. The man does not know that, they are not aware of this. Husbands should not go anywhere near the crops, that is once they are harvested. Once they are harvested they belong to the woman, not the man. Men are not supposed to interfere.”*

This was further supported by Rachel Lawino. When I asked Rachel Lawino about who was responsible for deciding what should be grown in the gardens for household food consumption she was very specific insofar as it seemed obvious to her that the gardens are the domain of women:

*“It is the woman who decides what is grown in the gardens... a woman is more knowledgeable on the issues of what is supposed to be grown so that the children can eat well. Men don’t understand these things. It is us women who know what our children need to eat and what we as a family need to eat. It is us women who tell the husbands what needs to be grown in the gardens. It is us who control the gardens, not the men. Crops are our domain. It is also us who make the food. Men simply do not understand. The land might be theirs, but we, us women have control.”*

This is a sentiment that is also supported by Otti.:

*“This is how I do it for my family. First I put aside what we will need for the year as a family. Then whatever is left will be sold at the market so that we can have some money.”*

Not only does Otti show that it is she who has control over the crops that are produced, but that it is important to have excess crops so that they can be sold at the local market.<sup>171</sup> Setting aside enough food for the whole year takes planning. In relation to whose reality counts, it is also clear from what Rachel Lawino says that, while the land might be that of the man, women are not without any power. Women are the ones who have control, as it is they who work on the land and it is they who are solely responsible for the food needs of their families. It is the evidence that is presented above that would contradict what Rwot Levi said, insofar as whatever a woman produces also belongs to the man as this is clearly not the case. However, with power, there comes a tremendous responsibility and burden, yet for women it is one that is socially expected of them.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that for married women from the villages of Adunu and Kom to be food secure and to be able to maintain access to and derive benefit from the land of their husbands, they must respect and conform to their socially constructed gender roles as wives, mothers and agricultural workers and thus support patriarchal gender relations. It is a support that is continuously negotiated and bargained.

It has also shown, that it is the payment of bridewealth that gives married women some sense of security when they marry, as it cements their marriage. However, by accepting to marry, women do have to make certain concessions, of which accepting being ‘bought’ is one, as there is clearly a proprietary element to it, thus echoing the work of Therborn (2004); Malinga and Ford

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<sup>171</sup> One of the reasons why women have so much power is that people who live in the villages are not normally involved in the production of cash crops for large scale commercial sale. Rather the surplus crops that they have are limited.. If this was not the case and cash groups were being produced then it would be men who would have control.



(2010) and (Goody & Tambiah, 1973). Also clear is that any children that are born belong to the clan of the husband and not the mother. Even if this is the case, the payment of bridewealth is an important feature of life in the villages, and, as noted, it is a practice that is unlikely to change nor evolve in the immediate future as it is seen as being needed, even if there is much opposition to it, (see Chapter Two). It is the process of marriage that sees a woman go from the control of the generational patriarch to that of the conjugal patriarch. This is a process that sees a women change from being socially classified as a girl to that of a woman.

In relation to land access, as noted, women access the land of their husbands upon marriage. Many of the women perceive that the land that they reside upon is not only of their husband's family, but is also theirs. It is the payment of bridewealth and the union of marriage that gives women this sense of ownership and control. In a mainly poor farming community where land is undifferentiated and in most cases in abundance, this is expected.

Even if married women do feel secure on the land that they reside upon because of the status of being a wife, they are though, well aware that if they wish to continue to reside upon the land, that they must work hard, (this is even if their husbands don't, as it is their responsibility to provide food for the family), as if they do not they will be failing in one of their gender roles. They must also be able to serve their husbands and accept that their husbands have power over their sexual freedom and reproductive system. It is also important that wives do not forget their place on the gender hierarchy and that they do not challenge the masculinities of their husband, nor expect to be seen as being equal to their husbands.

Other than women supporting the institution of marriage, as shown here, women themselves are in part responsible for the continuation of unequal inheritance rights as they themselves support patrilineal inheritance. It is just expected that women will marry and that they will acquire land from their husbands. In relation to the purchase of land, as husbands are the formally recognised heads of households, even if wives do facilitate with the rare purchase of land, few wives are interested in having equal legal ownership as

it is possibly deemed unnecessary. Or maybe it cannot be imagined? What became clear whilst discussing land issues with married women was that who has control over the land is of little relevance; what is of importance is what one does with the land. This clearly goes against a great deal of literature and policy that is proposed by the World Bank and NGOs, as noted in Chapter Two.

That said, married women are by no means without agency and power as it is clear from the evidence that has been provided here that married women have some control and power over crop production and also the foods that are produced from such crops. It is this power over crops, and the running of the home that I believe gives married women their elevated status. Decisions on how the crops are utilized outside of the home, are specific to each family, and thus cannot be generalised. That said, when I asked who has control over any profits from the minimal crop sales, most women indicated that decisions were taken jointly, however ultimately as observed; as the land belongs to the husband's family it is he who will have the final say. However, and this is an extremely important point, because the crops that are grown are mainly, if not all for the household's food consumption, if any of them are sold, they are sold because people need basic household foodstuffs that they are not able to grow, for example salt, sugar, cooking oil and some fresh produce, such as onions and tomatoes and soap. They also need to pay for their children to attend school. Thus in effect, the debate as to who has power over monetary resources is not applicable to many of the people that I interviewed.

With regards to a married woman's food security, if anything it is married women who are more food secure than men. In relation to a married woman's food security, having access to land is only one of the variables that is needed. Unless there is a favourable climate, effective planning, support, resources and respect for what is grown in the gardens then neither they nor their families will be food secure. So in the case of the household it is having enough to eat and also enough to sell.

For a married woman to continue to access her husband's lands, she must be prepared to fulfil her social constructed gender role of wife and work hard in

the gardens. If all internal factors and external factors are favourable then she is likely to be food secure. Land tenure Insecurity though, as I will now discuss in the following chapter, can happen if a woman loses her husband and her rights, both social and legal are challenged.

## **Chapter Six-Widows**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the lives of widows who participated in this research. Its purpose is to answer the following questions: How do widows continue to access and retain access to the lands of their late husband's? How do gender relations between widows and the male members of their late husband's family influence a widow's and her household's food security?

As with previous chapters, the chapter is presented thematically. Firstly, it looks at the traditional practices that should afford widows secure access and control over their late husband's ancestral lands and also at the policies of the state. It is here where I introduce the concessions that widows should be prepared to make if they wish to continue to live on the land of their late husband. Secondly, it discusses the practice of wife inheritance and the implications that not only wife inheritance, but also wife cleansing, can have on widows. And, thirdly, the chapter presents an overview of the realities of the lives of two widows whom I interviewed from the village of Adunu. I specifically look at how their access to their late husband's land has been influenced since their husband's deaths. It is during these case studies that I also look at how gender relations influence a widow's food security.

### **6.2 Role of the patriarch**

As the vast majority of married women in the villages of Adunu and Kom reside on the lands of their husband and his family, when a woman becomes a widow, instead of the conjugal patriarch having control, his wife's control will be passed on to the patriarch of the family, in this case either a brother, father or uncle to the late husband. Widows fall under the ultimate control of the generational patriarch, as it is the patriarch, or in this case the head of the family, who has the power and authority to control the land where she

resides.<sup>172</sup> So that I could understand what the role of the patriarch is when a woman becomes a widow, I interviewed Rwot Moses.<sup>173</sup>

Rwot Moses: *“My brother has died and he has left me with the children and the mother. It is my responsibility as a person who has remained on earth to make sure that where he was cultivating remains for the wife and the children of my dead brother.”*

In analysing this quotation, there are several points that warrant attention. Firstly, Rwot Moses is very clear that it is the role of the patriarch, or in this case, the designated head of the extended family, to make sure that the widow and her children continue to access and have control over the lands of the late husband. This would imply that their access should not be challenged and that they should be protected and ultimately respected.<sup>174</sup> As the following quotes show, men do think that widows are protected.

### **6.3 My husband has died. What does that mean for me in terms of land access? A man’s perspective. Reward**

Rwot Moses: *“A widow inherits land. It is their responsibility to take over the running of the land, for themselves and for their children until they die or until they pass the land down to their children. If you have a lot of land, it is important to make sure that all of the sons are given land, very important.”*

Samuel : *“Yes, she inherits the land. She has already been given the land. There is no way, that now you should send her away. The land now belongs to that family and she is to stay together with the children on that land.”*

The above quotations indicate several points. Firstly, as widows are expected to take over the running of the farm, this would and does imply that prior to the death of the conjugal patriarch that it was they who controlled not only their

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<sup>172</sup> The generational patriarch has control not only over the women in the family, (in this case widows), but he also has ultimate control over the younger male members of the family.

<sup>173</sup> I asked Wrot Moses about this topic, because of his position as chief. Ultimately, the Acholi people are subjects to their chiefs and should conform to the rules of the chiefdom.

<sup>174</sup> See Appendix Three for a copy of the Principles and Practices of Customary Tenure.

wives, but also the farm, thus implying that women are only free and able to run and have control of their farms if their husband is deceased. It is the death of their husband that gives a woman an elevated status in the gender hierarchy. Secondly, widows are custodians of the land as the land is intended for use by their sons, which, as noted, is also the position of men, insofar as all traditional land is held in trusteeship and is for further generations (Budlender & Alma, 2011). However, what is of importance here, is that widows have full control over the land of their late husband, because the land became theirs when they married. It is Samuel who supports this, when he says that women have already been given the land. It is also this statement by Samuel that challenges the Western notion of inheritance, insofar as you can only inherit land if someone has died. It is also this meaning of inheritance that is so often used and used wrongly in international development thinking. Implying that widows do not inherit is misleading. This is supported by both Doss et al. (2011) and Burke and Kobusingye (2014) and also, as previously noted in Chapter Five, by Judy Adoko. That said, as I will discuss, for a widow to inherit and or access land it is far from being this simple. Rwot Latyet may claim that widows should not be disturbed and that their rights to land should not be challenged, but in reality things can be very different.

#### **6.4 A reflection of reality**

Women's ability to inherit the land of their late husband's and to have control over his ancestral land was also discussed by George, the head of the Twero clan. In contrast to the previous quotations, George indicates that widows, even if they are entitled to remain on the lands of their late husband's, must be prepared to make certain concessions. Not only does he imply this, but he also makes reference to what widows are entitled to with regards to State legislation and policy.

George, Head of the Twero clan: *"Say your husband dies; you can still stay on that land. You can stay on that land without any disturbance. That land is yours, all of it."*

Lisa: *“From my understanding a woman who is a widow remains on the land of her husband’s land as the custodian of that land, traditionally she does not inherit that land?”*

George: *“Yes she inherits the land, she inherits all of it. Not just 15% like the government says. She inherits all of it. Yes it is for her sons, but that is normal. She is there to make sure that the land stays in her husband’s family. It is land that is for her children. Women have equal rights. The land belongs to her and the children. A widow would only lose the land if she goes away, if she decides to marry someone else; someone outside of the clan. It’s important that you understand that women have every right to stay on the land of their husbands. They are the mothers of their husband’s children. They are very important in our community. No one should even try and take land away from a widow. It is an insult to the memory of the husband to the father and to the brother; it is simply unforgivable.”*

George, like Samuel and Rwot Moses, confirms and reinforces that widows are permitted to continue to reside on the land of their late husband’s and that they inherit the land of their late husbands and that they also have control over this land. However, it is clear from Michael’s narrative that it is assumed that all widows will be mothers, which in a patriarchal society that gives so much emphasis to the producing of children, is to be expected. After all it is one of, if not the most important, socially constructed gender roles that exist within the Acholi culture, the villages of Adunu and Kom included. It is having children and not remarrying outside of the clan that gives a widow her continued value and status within the community and ultimately her right to be able to continue to reside on the lands of her husband. The main reason why widows are afforded a level of importance within the clan is that it is they who are responsible for bringing up the children of the deceased clan member. In effect, having children affords a widow secure access to her late husbands land. This is something that was supported by the Sub County Chief:

*“If you don’t have any children, then that for the woman is bad if she loses her husband. If there are no kids, then there is no concrete reason why she should stay on the land of her husband’s. Why would she, what is she doing there? Especially if she is young, that land should be given to the others in the family. To those who have children. And she, the woman who doesn’t have either a husband or any kids should go back to her parent’s home.”*

*Lisa: “Ok, so basically if a woman does not have children her access to the land is threatened.”*

*Sub County chief: “Yes it can be. But for a family, it may still be important for you to remain on the land. That is why you are given the alternative to going home, that of marrying a brother. You can also take control of some of the other children in the family. There are always children who are without a parent. That, here, is due to the war and to HIV.”*

It is clear from the above discussion with the Sub County Chief that widows who are without children have options and that they are also able to make some decisions as to their future. However, the choices themselves are limited. Firstly, there is the option of just returning home. Being given the option to just leave is almost like women are being dismissed and that if women have no children then they as women are of no value to the clan. Even if evicting a widow goes against the fundamental principles of the Acholi culture, it is clear that the extended family’s needs are deemed to be more important than those of a childless widow. The simple fact that a widow may have spent years, if not decades on the ancestral lands of her late husband, is of no relevance. Neither is the fact that she depends on these lands for her personal food needs. Being given the choice of looking after and caring for an orphaned child from a woman’s husband’s clan could give women some status and enhance their value to the clan. However, if the child is not a male then their access to land in the future could be compromised as female children will be expected to marry and leave. Where would this leave their adoptive mother? Moreover



if there are orphans, then the land that they would get access to when they reach adulthood would be the land of their late father and not their adoptive mother. It is clear that there are problems with the option proposed by the Sub County Chief.

Other than adopting a child from their late husband's clan, the Sub County Chief proposes that a widow, and more specifically a widow who does not have children, could marry from within the clan of her late husband. This is something that I will return to later within this chapter as the issue of a Samuel rate marriage is of fundamental importance (Obbo, 1986).

When referring once again to what George said, other than the importance and emphasis that is given to a widow having children, Michael refers to one of the concessions that widows must be prepared to make if they wish to continue to reside on the lands of their late husband, this being that if they wish to take another husband, that the man must be from within the deceased husband's clan. If they decide to marry someone who is not a member of, say, for example, the Twero clan, then they will have to forfeit not only their legal rights, but also their traditional rights to the land of their late husband and leave. They would also be expected to leave their children with the clan of their late husband.<sup>175</sup> It is these concessions that are once again related to a woman's freedom to choose how she fulfils her sexual needs and connections to her own children. Even if Michael does think that women, and more specifically widows, have equal rights, I would strongly argue that they do not. As if they did, they would be able and free to choose who they marry and where they live.

## **6.5 State policy and how it supports widows**

With regard to inheritance and what the state says widows should be afforded, this was also discussed by the legal representative for the NGO, Ugandan Land Alliance (ULA).

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<sup>175</sup> As I have already discussed in great detail, any children born during a marriage where bridewealth has been paid belong to the husband's clan and not to the mother, nor to the mother's clan.

*“if a woman loses the husband, the widow by the state is allowed to inherit the land of her dead husband. That is what the law states, it’s about 15%. The children get the rest. So the woman is allowed to inherit that land, well 15%.”<sup>176</sup>*

Even if the state has recognised the needs of widows, there are numerous problems with the Succession Act. As previously discussed, legislation as proposed by the state, like the clans, stipulate that a widow is only allowed to inherit the land of their late husband if they remain unmarried. If they do remarry then the 15% that they are to be legally allocated no longer applies. Widows also lose their rights to the lands of their husbands if they are continuously absent from the home for more than six months. Thus the little that women are legally entitled to is governed by the choices that widows make that pertain to (as I will later discuss) their future sexual and reproductive needs. It is clear that the Ugandan state is supporting and reinforcing the gender order (Connell, 2009) and promoting patriarchy (Walby, 1999). Also a valid question to ask, in relation to the 15% that the government think widows should get is, is 15% enough land to meet the food needs of a widow and her family, or even of a widow if she is without children? I argue that if the widow’s plot is already small, then 15% would not be enough. This is another indication that the Succession Act is seriously flawed and that the needs of women have not been addressed by the Government, which once again supports the contention that the state is intrinsically masculine. Even if there are, for example, people like Rugadya et al. (2007) Wanyeki (2003), who propose that Uganda is a gender progressive nation, it is far from this. However, in areas of the country where traditional land practices prevail (of which the north and the villages where I conducted my research are examples), how is a widow supposed to make a claim to 15% of the land when there can be no formal title given? The Succession Act has no meaning and relevance in the realities of female subsistence farmers, or those who may also partake in the informal cash economy. In fact, when I talked to women in the villages about the

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<sup>176</sup> Under Section 27 of the Succession Act (amendment) Decree 1972 women are entitled to 15% of the estate of their late husbands, this includes all wives. 75% is for the children including those who were born out of marriage, 1% is for the legal heir and 9% is for other dependents.

Succession Act, none of them were aware that it even existed and so it is irrelevant in village contexts.

## **6.6 Concessions**

Having discussed the importance of children and what widows should be afforded, be this from the clan or the limited provisions as per the state, I will now refer back to the concessions that some widows will need to make if they wish to continue residing on the ancestral lands of their late husband. This is so even if traditionally they are socially expected to be able to continue to reside on their husband's lands as bridewealth will have been for them.<sup>177</sup> One of the concessions frequently discussed, as noted in Chapter Four, is wife inheritance or the Samuel rate marriage. It is this that I will now refer to.

### **6.6.1 Wife inheritance: traditional expectations**

What became apparent whilst I was doing this research, was that previously there was never any real debate among the people that I interviewed about widows and land access as it was taken as a given that upon the death of their husband they would automatically be inherited by another male from the clan of their late husband.<sup>178</sup> By being inherited, or taking a Samuel rate husband, a widow's access to their late husband's lands would be unchallenged. As I will discuss, it is only recently that wife inheritance has started to change and in many respects evolve.

*Lisa: "Could you tell me about wife inheritance please?"*

*Okidi: "In the past we used to inherit women when a brother died. The major thing is to take care of the children who have been produced by my brother. You also need to take over and to manage the woman. Sometimes you would sleep there and you would produce more children with the woman. That woman would become the man's second co-wife, and those children will also*

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<sup>177</sup> If women become widows and no bridewealth was paid for them then they as a woman have no right to make claim to the lands of their partner,

<sup>178</sup> I talked about the issue of wife inheritance with several elders, my father in law included. The general response was that it was a normal occurrence. So much so, that even my father in law inherited his late brother's wife.

*be your children. That one is done because we don't want that woman to run away. You don't want that woman to go away and to leave the children there. The woman must stay there and manage the children that she has produced with your brother."*

Even if a widow's access to her late husband's lands would be unchallenged, it is clear from what Okidi has said that they must be prepared to accept being controlled by their inheritor and that the presence of the generational patriarch as a controlling force was not enough. A widow needs to be controlled by someone from within the actual widow's home, thus a Samuel rate. This reaffirms the patriarchal ideologies of the clans and also reinforces the gender hierarchy. It is this power and authority that also allows the inheritor to enter into a sexual relationship with the widow.<sup>179</sup> This may be another way of controlling a widow's agency and making sure that she does not leave the clan of her late husband. It also ensures that the widow will continue producing children for a clan who will have paid bridewealth for her. What I find really interesting from the quote by Okidi, is the issue that women 'needed' to be inherited as it was a way of making sure that they would continue to look after any children that have been born. This shows that a widow's status is intrinsically linked to their children and that even if socially the children do not belong to her, it is her responsibility to cater for their needs and to fulfil her socially constructed gender role as a mother. If it is the women who are expected to look after the children, a valid question to ask is, 'why were inheritors needed?' Yes, the men were to take care of these children, but how? The appointment of an inheritor for the children is also something that is supported by the state, though in relation to the state it is a guardian.

The Succession Act, states that when a woman becomes a widow and she has children, if there is no will a guardian should be appointed to act jointly with the mother to care for the children. The guardians, in order of priority, are: the father of the deceased, the brother and sisters of the deceased man's father, (so his paternal uncles or aunts), the deceased man's mother's brother or, finally, the deceased mother's father. By no means can the deceased

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<sup>179</sup> All of the women whom I met who had been inherited had had children with their inheritor.

mother's sisters or mother be appointed as guardians to his children. What is of real interest (and I would say concern) is that under the Succession Act there is no provision for a widow to have sole rights and guardianship over her own children. For a country that is signatory to numerous human rights conventions, as discussed in Chapter Four, it is interesting to see that widows are legally not permitted to have full control over their children. This clearly supports the work of those such as Connell (2009) and Walby (1999) and also Brown (1992) that the state is patriarchal and also masculine. Johnson (2005) also argues that the state is male centred, male identified and male dominated.<sup>180</sup> It would appear that it is not only the clans, but also the state through its policies and legislation, which sees women as being incapable of bringing up their own children if they become widows.

I further asked Okidi if he believed that the practice of wife inheritance was a positive tradition.

*Lisa: "Do you think that in the past it was a good tradition to have?"*

*Okidi: "In the past, yes it was very good. It allowed families to stay united. Even if a widow was allowed to stay on the land, it was good. Women should be looked after. But now, it is spoilt; people are now divided. You find that men now do not want to inherit, and that women do not want to be inherited. Now it is seen as backwards, which is a shame, as it used to work very well".*

It is clear from what Okidi has said, that a widow's continued access to the lands of her late husband was not necessarily contingent on her being inherited, even if, as I have argued, it was taken as a given. In stating that women should be looked after, it implies that women are socially perceived as being the weaker sex and that they themselves are not capable of supporting either their needs or the needs of their children. This is, as noted above, a

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<sup>180</sup> 35% of MPs in Uganda are women; however, as I have already argued in Chapter Four, their ability to implement change and to actively support women living in rural areas of the country is limited. Not only that, but if women MPs did have any real power in the Uganda parliament then the Succession Act and the Marriage and Divorce bill would have been amended.

sentiment that is also supported by the masculine state. It could be argued that it was to a certain degree a functional relationship, insofar as it facilitated the accessing of resources and also gave women a degree of agency, although it was men who benefitted the most.

From informal meetings that I had with elderly women who had been inherited, it became clear that the men who inherited them in effect did very little to support their needs and those of their children. This specifically relates to working in the gardens and also in supporting them financially. One widow that I was told about, the narrative of which was retold to me from the perspective of several of her children, has had little or no help from the man who inherited her 20 plus years ago. It has been her responsibility to cultivate her land. (She, like others that I will refer to, committed the social taboo of using oxen to cultivate her land). It has also been her sole responsibility to educate her children. From what I was able to ascertain, the only contribution that the man who inherited her has made is to assert his right to have sexual relations with her. Other than this, he has done very little, thus once again questioning the rationale as to why women need to be inherited.

Although Okidi believes that inheritance was and is a positive aspect of the Acholi culture, he, like others, implies that the practice has evolved and that it is practiced with less frequency as it is seen as being an outdated. From a feminist perspective I too see it as being an outdated practice that in reality is only of real benefit to the men who inherit, as not only do they control a woman's reproductive ability, but they also have power over their day-to-day lives if they choose to exert this power. What though, is of interest, is that not only are the attitudes of men changing, but so too are those of women. I argue that women, even in remote areas of Uganda, are becoming aware that the practice of wife inheritance is of no real benefit to them and that they as women actively have a choice. It is a demonstration that women are prepared to assert their agency. However, even if this may be the case there are other reasons why wife inheritance has evolved and is evolving, as I will now discuss.

## 6.6.2 The impact of HIV

Prior to interviewing Okidi, I interviewed Samuel . Instead of him perceiving that wife inheritance has decreased because it is seen as an outdated practice and because of changing attitudes he proposed that wife inheritance has decreased because of the high prevalence of HIV in Uganda and in the Acholi region specifically.<sup>181, 182</sup>

Lisa: *“What about wife inheritance, does that still happen?”*

Samuel : *“Er, on a small scale now... today people now fear HIV-Aids. This has gone deep into the minds of people. Now before you inherit your brother’s wife, you both have to go for testing. That is talked about a lot, people are very fearful of it.”*<sup>183</sup>

Lisa: *“Do you think then that wife inheritance had decreased solely because of the presence of HIV?”*

Samuel : *“Yes, just because of that, if it wasn’t for HIV, I think inheritance would have continued.”*<sup>184</sup>

Inheritance happening less due to HIV was also discussed by the Sub County chief.

*“A woman, though, could always take the brother of her dead husband, but that is happening less and less now because of HIV and those illnesses. If, though, you are ok, then yes you could marry a brother, you have to be ok, though”.*

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<sup>181</sup> Whilst I was conducting my research the widow of my husband’s deceased nephew who died in 2012 was inherited by another member of the Twero clan. It is a decision that she made herself as she was by no means expected to take another husband. The man in question does not reside with her full time. He does, however, help her in her gardens. Both of them had to be tested for HIV before any relationship could begin.

<sup>182</sup> HIV prevalence in the North Central area of Uganda, the Acholi region included, in 2011 was 10.1% women and 6.3% men. Rates of infection are higher among women as they marry younger than men, thus become sexually active at an earlier age and also due to their partners being older. It is these partners who may possibly have had several sexual partners before marrying and, as condom use is still low in Uganda, it is they who infect young women (see <http://www.avert.org/hiv-aids-uganda.htm>).

<sup>183</sup> In 2011 of those who were living with HIV/AIDS, 32.4% of them were widows and 31.4% widowers.

<sup>184</sup> I am unable to say what impact the war has had on wife inheritance. However, given the high levels of poverty that are evident in the village I would argue that men may be less inclined to want the responsibility of another family, even if that family is of their clan.

Even if both Samuel and the Sub County chief propose that wife inheritance is dying out because of HIV/AIDS, or, as Okidi proposes, because it is seen as being backwards, it is still a reality for some Acholi women (and, a reality that they are expected to openly embrace and accept), as the following exert shows.<sup>185, 186</sup>

### 6.6.3 Challenging tradition

During one of the numerous discussions that I had with Emmanuel, the legal advisor from the ULA, we discussed the issue of wife inheritance and also a widow's position within the family once their husband dies. The following is from one of our discussions.

Emmanuel: *"Now I am going to give you a specific case. In Agago here, a widow after the death of her husband resisted the brother in law to inherit her.<sup>187</sup> She said no. No you cannot inherit me. I am comfortable here. I am comfortable here with my children. I do not want any man.<sup>188</sup> The deceased husband's family took it in bad faith. They took it badly. They could not understand how she could resist. They said that the brother has the right to inherit her; after all they paid dowry for her.*

*They, the family married her.<sup>189</sup> So, when she resisted he now started digging her land. Not allowing her to dig. They restricted her to one garden. To just one garden. The community were ok with this, as for them the brother has rights. He has rights to her as the wife of the dead husband.*

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<sup>185</sup> As previously discussed, there is growing pressure on the government to make the practice illegal. However, as noted, the likelihood of that happening anytime soon is negligible.

<sup>186</sup> Wife inheritance is very context specific and I am by no means implying that it happens everywhere and with frequency.

<sup>187</sup> Agago is the district where I did my research, thus the justification for including this in my thesis.

<sup>188</sup> Aciro is a 50 year old widow with six children, four of whom are girls and two of whom are male. Socially she is classified as being an elder and an elderly widow. Those women who are usually challenged and expected to be inherited are often much younger and of childbearing age. This is something that I was told on several occasions in informal conversations.

<sup>189</sup> This refers to the payment of bridewealth



*We tried to mediate this issue as she came to me first. The mediation failed, so I took the matter to court. I wanted to claim a declaration of ownership that this land belongs to the widow and not to the husband's brother or anyone else. It is the land that is for her children, not just her. And those children are a part of the husband's family; they are a part of the clan.*

*This man fought; he fought hard in court. He shouted that this is his land, that this is their land and not hers. He demanded that he has the right to own the land, not her. At the end of the case, he lost the case. The magistrate showed that the law is very clear and that she has rights too, to own this land. The judgment was only passed a few weeks ago. I am hoping that they will follow through.”<sup>190</sup>*

The example that Emmanuel gave me highlights several issues that challenge a women's agency and also illustrate that women are vulnerable to the logics of a socially supported patriarchal society. It is not only men who support the subordination of women, but also the community at large, of which women will be included, echoing the work of those such as Lerner (1986); Sen (1990) and Johnson (2005). Once again, the importance and power that bridewealth has over women has been illustrated. As too, has the assertion that women are property and a property that can and should be owned (Hague et al., 2011). Even if the payment of bridewealth is not supposed to equate to the purchase of a woman, it is clear that in some cases that this is a perception and reality.

The women in question, Aciro, chose to exert her agency and her right to choose. However, as the quote illustrates, she was challenged and punished for doing so. Her access to her late husband's land was challenged and she was forced to rely on only one garden for her food needs. It is this inequality of access that challenges the traditional ideologies of the clan system, insofar as widows should always be able to remain on the lands of their late husband

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<sup>190</sup> I have recently followed up this interview and it would appear since the magistrates ruling Aciro has been able to freely access and use the land of her late husband without any interference from any member of her late husband's family. This includes David, this being the relative who brought the case. David did appeal to the High Court. However, he is currently serving a custodial sentence for murder so it is highly unlikely that his case will be heard.

and have enough land for themselves and their children (see Appendix Three). However, as land is ultimately under the domain of the patriarch, encroachment onto the lands of widows is easy to do and also it would appear easily justifiable (at least in this case). It is also clear from this example that a widow's food security is directly related to the relationships that she has with the male members of their clan.

In indicating that the land does not belong to the widow, this demonstrates that women are never fully socially accepted into their adoptive clan. It also shows their subordinate position. The extract also demonstrates that even if women do have children, as widows women are not secure and nor are women safe. If a more powerful figure wants a widow off the land then the presence of a woman's children and their kin will not help. By refusing to be inherited, I would like to argue that Aciro challenged the masculinities of her late husband's brother, insofar as she challenged his place within the gender hierarchy (Connell, 1987; 2005) and distorted the perceived gender order.

I would also argue that another reason why the clan of her late husband, specifically the man who wanted to inherit her, David, may have deemed it appropriate for Aciro to be inherited is so that they or he would be able to control her sexuality (Einsphar, 2010). As noted by Young (2006), a widow may be feared by the males in the community as she is no longer under the control of her husband and this also means that she, as a single adult, has control over her sexuality as it is no longer contained and controlled by her husband (Jacobs, 2013). Also, as previously discussed, clans are fearful of other clans gaining access to their lands. One key element, though, of Aciro's story, is that even if the state is often removed from the realities of those who live in rural areas of the country, when willing it can support disadvantaged women, especially widows.

#### **6.6.4 Cleansing**

As I have discussed, the practice of wife inheritance is still evident, though not to the extent that it used to be owing to HIV/AIDS and (as noted by Samuel) changing attitudes insofar as widows are resisting and men are no longer willing to take responsibility for a late brother's wife and family. The reasons

for this are unclear. However, poverty is a relevant factor. Putting a child through education, even in a country that advocates and provides free primary education, is an expense. Also running and managing two families can also be a challenge.

This is not to say though that men will not take advantage of a widow's perceived change of status and their vulnerability when she has lost her husband. Nor does it mean that widows, especially young widows, will not be subjected to the traditional practice of wife cleansing, Perry et al. (2014) and Human Rights Watch (2003a) as the following quotations illustrate.<sup>191</sup>

Susan A: *"No I wasn't inherited. My husband's brother wasn't interested in inheriting me. I was cleansed".*

Lisa: *"What do you mean by cleansed?"*

Susan: *"It's difficult to talk about. But, here it can happen that when a man dies the man's brother must have intercourse with the dead man's wife. It is traditional. It's supposed to make the woman, or me, clean. It is better than inheritance as it only happens the once. When you are inherited you have to stay with that man forever. It was a difficult time for me".*

It is quite clear from the above extract that Susan's experience has caused her emotional and possibly physical damage. By accepting the inevitable of being 'cleansed', this being, as argued by (Miriam, 2007:224), "a situation defined by men's implicit right to have sexual access to them."<sup>192</sup> I argue that she has demonstrated a level of agency and choice (see Einsphar, 2010) and, that by accepting to be cleansed she has chosen the lesser of two evils. As she implies, being cleansed is something that happens only once. She has, in effect, challenged her patriarchal oppressors; she has done this through the process of bargaining, as discussed most notably by Kandiyotti (1998) and also Agarwal, (1997) and (Kabber, 1994). When a women is inherited she is

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<sup>191</sup>The practice of widow/wife cleansing involves a male member of the late husband's clan having unprotected sexual intercourse with the widow. It is believed that the process will make her once again pure.

<sup>192</sup> Them, refers to women.

expected to behave like a wife and thus be willing and prepared to be submissive and accepting to the sexual needs and desires of the man who has inherited her for the rest of their life, or until the relationship ends. I would like to propose that, even if there are supposed strong justifications for conducting such a practice, insofar as it is connected to the funeral rites of the late husband (Nyanzi et al., 2009) as a feminist academic, I see it as a form of rape and exploitation of women. This exploitative and forced sexual relations supports both the work of Walby (1990) and Einsphar (2010), in that, women in patriarchal societies are at the service of men, as it is a man's right to assert his power and authority over a woman owing to their lower position on the gender hierarchy.

## **6.7 Our realities**

I now present the case studies of two women; however, before I discuss these cases I will first give an example of how men perceive the realities of widows in the villages of Adunu and Kom with regard to how they access land once they are widowed.

The following question was proposed to the land representative of the Twero clan, John. I have decided to include the opinions of John as he, like the other men whose opinions I have presented in this chapter, believes that women are under no threat of being denied access to the lands of their late husband. The following demonstrates this.

### **6.7.1 Men's perceptions of realities in the village**

*Lisa: "In the literature about land access for women, there's a general consensus in Uganda as a whole, that lots of women who have lost their husbands due to illness and especially conflict are being displaced from their husband's lands by other members of*

*the family. Do you have any experience of this within our community?”* <sup>193</sup>

*John: “This is not common with us here. I do think that these people in Gulu and the other side might do things like that.”*<sup>194</sup> *But not for us, here, no. Here a woman needs to continue to use the land of her husband where her husband has been buried until they die.”*

Socially it would appear that widows in the villages should have no problems and that they should not encounter any resistance if they wish to continue living on the lands of their deceased husband. As John implies, a widow has the right to reside on the lands of her late husband until she dies and that widows being displaced in the local context is not an actual reality; in other areas of the Acholi sub region, yes, but, in the village of Adunu, no.<sup>195</sup> However, as I will now illustrate, there are women who, once their status of wife changes to that of widow, face problems from the male members of their deceased husband’s families. So much so, that they are prepared to give up not only their social but also their legal rights to the lands of their husband and his ancestral family and start their lives again as minors on the lands of their father. I also agree that a widow’s value as women within the community as a whole also changes. This is especially the case if the widow is without living children, as I will now discuss.

## **6.8 My reality, Collins**

Collins is a 45 year old widow, who lives just of the roadside in the village of Adunu. She lost her husband to ill health in early 2013. Unlike the other widows who I interviewed, she has no living children as all four of the children that she gave birth to have passed away. She does, though, care for, and is responsible

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<sup>193</sup> The reason why I asked Okidi John this question was because of his position as land representative for the Twero clan. If there are problems with land access and or disputes over land the land representative of your clan is often consulted. That is after there has been failed consultation with one’s immediate family.

<sup>194</sup> Gulu is the informal capital of the Acholi region, an area of the region that experienced a high level of instability due to the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA).

<sup>195</sup> John lives in Adunu. However, numerous members of the Twero clan reside in Kom.

for, her 15 year old niece.<sup>196</sup> Collins's husband was the recognised custodian of the ancestral lands where she resides as he was, until his death, the eldest brother. Collins's has lived on the lands of her late husband since she married him as a teenager aged 15 in 1984. Her case, as I will now discuss, shows that widows, regardless of their age, can be and are actually very vulnerable in the local village context and that even if she has produced children, thus successfully fulfilling a key gender role, unless the children are living, her value as a woman within the extended family decreases. This is, even if, as discussed, widows are socially, as per the Acholi tradition, entitled to reside on the lands of their late husbands, with or without children.<sup>197</sup> Her story also demonstrates that if there have been tensions between the male members of the family, (in this case her husband and his younger brothers), once the eldest brother dies and control is passed onto the younger, aggrieved brother that the widow may be the one who suffers the consequences. As Collins's noted,

*"There were problems between them before my husband died; they were not relating very well. When he was sick, there was no one to help me take him to hospital."*

Prior to the death of her husband there were serious problems between her husband, the official custodian of the ancestral lands and one of his brothers, so much so that when he was ill the brother did not assist him.

### **6.8.1 My predicament**

When I interviewed Collins's I wanted to know if she had experienced any problems with the male members of her family since the death of her husband. I asked her about this owing to the data that is presented in Chapter Four, that is concerned with property grabbing and also because of the information that

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<sup>196</sup> The niece she cares for is her sister's daughter and not a member of her late husband's clan.

<sup>197</sup> I am aware that the Sub County Chief believes that if women have no living children that widows have no just cause to continue living on the ancestral lands of their late husband. However, this was not the residing opinion of those people that I talked to, be this informally or formally. Neither is it the socially accepted norm. See Section 6.E in Appendix Three.

I had received from the elite men of the community, of which the Rwot is included.

Lisa: *"Since you became a widow last year, have you had any issues about being able to stay on this land?"*

Collins's: *"There is tension that has started to come out. It is being directed by the younger brother to my husband."*

Lisa: *"Could you please explain to me what you mean by tension. What is happening?"*

Collins's: *"A garden that I used to cultivate, even if it is a garden that I used to cultivate and did cultivate last year. He, my husband's younger brother has sent his son to my garden. He has sent him there and told him that he should cultivate that garden."*<sup>198</sup>

From the narrative above there are several noteworthy points. Firstly, prior to the death of her husband, Collins's did not experience any problems insofar as no male member of her husband's family disturbed her or tried to encroach on her land. It is only with her husband's passing that she has begun to experience difficulties, which, as already noted, is not socially or legally acceptable. Secondly, and very importantly, is that instead of it being the newly appointed custodian to the lands who is causing Collins's problems, it is in fact his son, or Collins's nephew. Socially, even if men do take precedence at every level, men who are younger than women are expected to afford women, for example, their aunties, respect. I am unaware as to the justification for such a move. However, if I were to speculate I would argue that by sending a younger member of the family to encroach on the lands of a widow; that it is another way of undermining and belittling a widowed woman and her agency and a way of reminding women of where they figure in the gender hierarchy, in this case the bottom (see, Connell, 1987; 2001; 2005; 2009).

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<sup>198</sup> Property grabbing as proposed by Izumi (2007) is a new form of gender based violence as it threatens a widow's security and her livelihood, of which I believe food security to be included.

What also makes Collins's case of land encroachment of interest, is that only one of her gardens is being encroached on. The other gardens that she used to cultivate with her husband, be these gardens that were designated for beans, sim-sim or ground nut, have not been touched. Nor, do they appear to be under threat. The justification for this was given by Collins.

*"This one garden isn't even very big. But, it is a garden that is near to the water, so it is very fertile. Last year after I had cultivated the garden, I managed to buy oxen plough. So for me this brother of my husband is jealous. He does not want me to do well. I work very hard though, I always do. I am on my own. If and when I fall sick, because I have no children to help me, I need to make sure that I will have access to money. So buying the oxen was important. Working hard in the garden next to the water is important. That will allow me to have money."*

The quote above shows several things: Collins is well aware of the importance of cash crops (in this case rice) as it is the cultivating of rice on an area of very fertile land that facilitated her with being able to buy oxen.<sup>199</sup> As already discussed, it is well known and accepted in the villages that if people use oxen that their yield will be larger.<sup>200</sup> It is also this area of land that she believes will give her financial security, which for a widow who has no children is imperative.<sup>201</sup> By Collins being able to work productively since the death of her husband, she has illustrated to the male members of her late husband's family, (especially his brother), that she is capable of surviving on her own and that she is independent in her own right and that she can be successful. Not only has she been able to do this through her hard work in her garden, but she has

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<sup>199</sup> The other crops that she cultivated last season were not as successful, these being staple crops for household consumption. A sack of rice in 2014 had a market value of 120,000 shillings. This equates to roughly £40.

<sup>200</sup> That is if all other conditions are in the favour of the farmer.

<sup>201</sup> For widows who have no living children, and for widows who have decided not to be inherited if they are faced with problems in terms of being able to provide for themselves, the only option open to them is to return home to their ancestral lands and rely on the goodwill of their ancestral families for support. Unlike in the Global North and other areas of the world, there is no social assistance for the elderly by the state in Uganda.



also, as I will discuss, refused to be inherited. This implies that she is not prepared to make concessions.

### **6.8.2 The importance of having children**

I asked Collins why she thought she was experiencing problems with the male members of her late husband's family; that is other than the possibility that they are threatened by her success. What transpired, illustrated that a woman's status (and more specifically a widow's value) decreases if they do not have living children. This supports what the Sub County chief said, and that it is having children that affords women some security over land. This once again supporting the theory that children are a resource for women.

Collins: *"The main reason is that my brother, my husband's brother is trying to chase me away from these lands. He is trying to get rid of me. He is doing this because I do not have any children. The child that lives with me is the daughter to my sister, so for him she is not my child. She is not the daughter of my husband, of their family. That is why they want me off the land. That is why my husband's brother wants me off. He does not want me to have any access to any of the gardens of my husband; he wants me off this land because I do not have children."*

Lisa: *"Do you think then that if you had had living children that your situation would have been a bit different now?"*

Collins: *"Yes, I think there wouldn't be any problem. Like I have said, I am having these troubles, these problems because now they are seeing that I do not have any children. The land that my husband has left me on, he wants to grab it and take it and give it to his children."*

Even if Collins is responsible for a child, as the child is not from the clan of her late husband, the child does not afford Collins with any form of security. As noted previously by the Sub County Chief, a widow may take responsibility for an orphan. However, they need to be from the clan of the deceased husband's

family. What is interesting is that Collins has fulfilled her duty and role as mother. However, because her children are all deceased she has lost her social status as a mother. This implies that even if women do conform to their role as mother and produce children, as is expected, the children must be alive. If not, then women may be vulnerable. I am also interested in why she thinks her brother wants to grab her land. What she says implies that he believes that his children's needs far outweigh those of his sister in law, thus, once again supporting the notion that a woman's needs have less value than those of men, even if the men in question are younger.

Even if Collins does believe that her access to land is under threat because she has no living children, and because she believes that her late husband's brother is threatened by her success, she is more than aware of her rights. She is also aware of what she needs to do, so that her social and legal rights are respected and upheld as the following quotes demonstrate.

### **6.8.3 I know my rights**

*Lisa: Traditionally from my understanding, widows are allowed to have secure access to the land of their deceased husbands. Is that true?*

*Collins: Yes, traditionally that is the case. That is what it says. It says that I should be able to inherit the land of my late husband. It says that I should have access to all of the property that we had as a couple. This includes the house. It also says that I should be able to continue to use the gardens that I have worked on with my husband. Traditionally widows are protected by the clan. We were, after all, brought here and this land became our home. Even the government says that this is the case, that I, as widow, have the right to inherit the land of my husband. They say that even if I do not have living children.... How can a husband's brother expect someone, expect me to go back to my father's land? This is my land, this is my home."*<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> By law, if a widow does not have any children she is entitled to 50% of the land and not the 15 % if she were a widow with children. The remaining 50% is to be divided, 49 % to

Other than knowing her rights, which is clearly a positive (as knowing your rights is the first step to empowerment) what I find interesting here, is that Collins finds it difficult to comprehend that her brother in law expects her to return to the ancestral lands of her father. I would argue that she perceives this difficult to comprehend, because she is aware that marriage is meant to afford women a level of security. She gave the clan children, she worked on their land. Now she is entitled to continue living there, more so because she has resided on the lands of her late husband for thirty years. From a pragmatic perspective, it simply does not make sense for them to want to evict her.

As Collins is aware of her rights, both socially and legally, I asked her if she had brought the issue of land encroachment to the attention of not only her adoptive clan, but also of representatives of the government.

Lisa: *“Have you discussed this situation with any member of your clan, or with a representative of the government?”*

Collins: *“Yes of course. This is my land and I will fight for it.”<sup>203</sup> I’ve already taken him in front of the chairperson for the youth. He simple refused to leave the garden. Traditionally what he is doing is wrong. I’ve also taken him to the LC1, (local council village level) he even refused the LC1. Yes, I know the LC1 no longer has any real power. They are though still respected here in the village. I’ve now taken the matter up to the LC3 (Sub county level) as he has authority; he speaks for the government. He, the brother, has been given a summons to go to his office so that we can discuss the issue.”<sup>204</sup>*

Even if women are ultimately ruled by patriarchal ideologies, be these from the clan or the state, by Collins challenging the authority of the patriarch, I believe that this shows that women (and in this case a widow) are more than prepared to exert their agency and that even if women do live in rigid patriarchal

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the dependent relatives and one % to the nominated customary heir. This will, of course, be a man.

<sup>203</sup> What Collins says here supports what Judy Adoko said, insofar as women are aware that they have rights and that they will fight for them.

<sup>204</sup> See Appendix Eight for the meanings of LC1 and LC3.

societies, they do have a certain degree of power. Yes, her brother in law and his son are causing her obstacles; however, the simple fact that she is refusing to give up and that she is making use of available avenues demonstrates this. It also shows that there are some support mechanisms in place for women who are having their rights to land challenged.

#### **6.8.4 Divisions within the family**

What also transpired from the interview that I conducted with Collins, was that not all of the male members of her late husband's family are against her. Nor do they find her presence on their ancestral lands to be a threat. Not only this, but they also believe that she should be able to freely access and to continue living on the lands of her late husband regardless if she has living children or not.

*Collins: "My husband's other brother is very supportive. He supports me."<sup>205</sup> But he is fearful that because he is supporting me that it might bring tension between him and his brother. This is, of course tension and problems that he does not want. They are after all brothers. It was him though who advised me to go to the sub county."*

There are two things that I find interesting from the above quote. Firstly, by supporting Collins, her brother in law is actively demonstrating that a widow's status and value within the community should not be challenged and that widows should be afforded respect and continued access to their late husband's lands as is the perceived Acholi way.<sup>206</sup> Secondly, as families prefer that personal issues and grievances are dealt with within the family and by one's clan members, by encouraging Collins to take the matter to the attention of the sub country, or in this case the LC3, she has demonstrated that her clan is ineffective.

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<sup>205</sup> The brother who is supportive of her is the youngest brother in the family. I had the opportunity to talk to him informally about the situation with Collins. For him, even if his loyalties should lie with his brother, he does not agree with how Collins is being treated as for him she is a part of the family. She is their sister. For him, it is important not to challenge traditional practices.

<sup>206</sup> See Appendix Three.

### 6.8.5 The relevance of having a man

As wife inheritance is seen as, or was seen as, a social norm and a means of affording and providing women with security, I asked Collins about wife inheritance.<sup>207</sup> After all, socially and traditionally if a woman is inherited then she can continue to reside on the lands of her late husband without fear of being displaced, because she will still be under the control of her late husband's clan. She will not be seen as a threat, and neither will she negate her duties as a mother or worse, enter into sexual relations with someone from another clan.

Lisa: *"Would the situation be different if you were to marry a member of the clan, so if you were to be inherited?"*

Collins: *"Maybe. But, nowadays things are different. It is not there like it used to be, because of the health condition of people. If I want to get another man, he would first need to talk to me like my husband had done. He would first need to convince me why we should stay together. Only then would I accept. I need to want to be with this man and he also needs to be tested for HIV/AIDS. I cannot be forced to take a man from my husband's clan. I cannot be forced to take a relative. I cannot be forced to take anyone for that matter. I do not have to do anything that I do not want to do."*

Lisa: *"Do you think then that inheritance has stopped then, or is it much less because of the issue of HIV?"*

Collins: *"Yes, I do think that HIV has changed things, people are frightened, and it is an illness that kills you. It does not kill like it used to, but it is still an illness that kills you."*

Even if Collins does accept that wife inheritance is still a social norm, it is clear that there has been an evolution in the way in which it is done and also in its frequency. I would like to argue that women, especially those such as Collins

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<sup>207</sup> As I have evidence that both supports and challenges the presence of wife inheritance I will make no clear judgement as to its presence and frequency.

who come across as being women in control of their own bodies and their lives have through the evolution of the tradition of wife inheritance become empowered and gained a sense of themselves. Having the right to choose, and being able to choose shows that women have more agency and ultimately power.

However, if, for example, Collins had decided to be inherited, there is a possibility, and a high one at that, that her brother in law and his son would not have challenged her traditional and legal rights to the land of her late husband, nor encroached on her land. What I also find interesting about this quote is that, unlike in the past, prospective inheritors are given several ultimatums. Firstly, if a man wanted to inherit her they would need to demonstrate to her that they are in a position to treat her how she would want to be treated, thus implying that widows are in a position to negotiate and bargain (Kandiyotti, 1988) and that they are aware that they have value and status. Yes, ultimately a man has control, as women are taught from an early age that their position in the gender order is to obey and serve. However, it is far from being this simplistic. Secondly, not only the widow, but also any prospective inheritor needs to demonstrate that they are HIV negative.<sup>208</sup>

What Collins's case has shown is that widowed women who are without living children can have their access to their husband's lands challenged by other male members of their deceased husband's family and that unless they are supported, can find themselves in a very vulnerable position, even if socially and legally they are to be protected, especially those widows where bridewealth was paid. However, as Collins's case has demonstrated, there can be disparities within a family insofar as some of the males may actively support widows, whilst others do not. It also shows that the patriarch can be challenged, albeit discreetly, as the gender hierarchy needs to be respected. In essence it is family specific and this is something that cannot be generalised. The interview with Collins has also demonstrated that women

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<sup>208</sup> There is evidence that stipulates that wife inheritance has increased HIV infection rates, especially in Kenya.

have power to decide if they wish to be inherited or not. As proposed by Obbo (84:1986),

*“How widows adjust to the husbandless status may be as much a function of their personalities as of differences in societal ideologies”.*

However, they must be, if it is needed, prepared to fight and to defend not only their social and traditional rights, but also their legal rights.

### **6.9 My reality Jenifer:**

I also interviewed Jenifer, a 30 year old widow with three children. Akello Paulina, like most women in the villages where I conducted my research, married as a teenager and bridewealth was paid. She moved onto the lands of her late husband's family when she married in 2001. Jenifer resided on the lands of her late husband only briefly, as she, like most of the people in the villages of Adunu and Kom, was forced to leave her home and move into an IDP camp, in late 2002. Whilst she was in the camp her husband died. I am uncertain as to the cause of his death; however the year was 2006.<sup>209</sup> When it was deemed safe to go home in 2007, she returned to the lands of her husband and his family, even though her husband was no longer alive. She returned to his land, because she was aware that it was her right to do so, more so because during her marriage she had had two children with her husband.

During the time that she lived on the ancestral lands of her deceased husband (this being between 2007 until 2012), she had access to four gardens, which for a family of four was more than sufficient for not only her food needs, but also those of her children. Other than the two children that Jenifer had with her late husband, she also has another child. This child is from a relationship that

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<sup>209</sup> I did not feel that it was appropriate to ask Jenifer how her husband died as it may have been related to HIV. As, even if there have been changes in people's attitudes towards disclosing ones status it is still a taboo subject.

she had with another member of her late husband's clan that began after the death of her husband.

What is different about Jenifer, is that, unlike Collins, she has chosen (albeit under strained circumstances) to return to the ancestral lands of her father. However, what they do have in common is the fact that they both worked hard enough whilst on their own that they were in the position to buy cattle. Jenifer, like Collins bought oxen, Jenifer, like Collins, has also experienced pressure from a brother of her late husband because she was perceived to be resource rich, as the following exert illustrates.

*Jenifer: "Even if I was on my own with kids, I worked really hard. So hard that I managed to buy some cattle. It's really important for us as famers to have cattle. If you don't have cattle all you have is your hands and what can you do with your hands? Well, my husband's brother was jealous, he didn't like the idea that I had cattle and he didn't. I don't know why he didn't have cattle, but I would say that it was because he is lazy. He leaves his wife to do most of the work in the garden whilst he drinks. He asked me lots of times if he could use my oxen. I said no. I had worked too hard to buy them. As a woman, it's not even my job to plough. But being on your own it's what you have to do.*

*He was angry with me, really angry with me. He made my life very difficult, and he used the fact that it was him who had given my husband his land as an excuse to cause me problems. He said I should be grateful. In the end I sold my cattle because I could not take it anymore. I could not stand him making my life difficult. He also said that because my husband was dead that I had no right to the land. The land was theirs and could never be mine. He also hated the fact that I had another child. In the end I just had to go. I had to leave because he made my life too hard."*

There are numerous things that I find interesting from the above narratives. Firstly, Jenifer is more than aware of the pressures that single women face when they are on their own in relation to their limited capacity, as they, unlike



married women, are often the only adults within a family. This is of course the case if a widow is young and her children are also young. However, she is also aware that if she worked hard that there can and will be rewards, of which being in a position to buy oxen is one. However, even if yields will increase, having cattle can actually have a negative impact on a widow's security of access to the ancestral lands of their late husband, especially if, as discussed by Jenifer, other men in her family of marriage are without that key resource (in this case oxen). As previously noted, it is felt that women should never have more than men. If they do they will be destabilising rigid patriarchal social norms. They will also be challenging the masculinities of the male members of their adoptive clan and going against the gender order.

That said, Jenifer's case also echoes what I have said earlier in Chapter Five, that even if there are two adults within a household, if they do not have a strong work ethic then they will not only lack in key resources, (in this case oxen) but ultimately their food security could and may be challenged.

Jenifer challenged not only the masculinities of her brother-in-law because she has more resources than him, but also the gender divisions of labour that are socially acceptable within the villages of Kom and Adunu. Even though she knew that the job of ploughing is strictly that of the male members of a community, she went against this gender regime and did the work herself. In my opinion, Jenifer tried to challenge the gender order. However, as the narrative also illustrates, when men are faced with 'difficult' and challenging women, it is men who ultimately have the upper hand and the advantage because they are the ones who control the key resource, which is, of course, land. Even if, as the following shows, Jenifer is more than aware of her rights, if the abuse and problems that women encounter from their deceased husband's family are too much then they have no option other than to leave and return home to their own ancestral lands if this is possible.

*Lisa: "Are you aware that both traditionally and legally you have access to your husband's land?"*

*Jenifer: "Yes, I knew this, but it was easier to come home, I had had enough of being disturbed by him".*

Lisa: *"When you say disturbed, what do you mean by that?"*

Jenifer: *"He used to attack me verbally, the words were bitter, they hurt."*

Lisa: *"Did you ever address this issue with your clan?"*

Jenifer: *"Yes, I tried. I reported the case to their clan. They even promised that they are going to come and settle the matter. I have waited in vain. Nothing has changed."*

Lisa: *"Would you consider state legal action?"*

Jenifer: *"Yes, I am considering taking legal action. I am now at home with the children and even if it was them who made my life very difficult, they are now saying that I have stolen their children. That I have stolen the children of their son. I will need to do something."*

As I have illustrated, Jenifer is more than aware of her social rights as a widow. So much so that she has even brought the matter to the attention of her adoptive clan (though, as noted with no success). I would like to argue that the reason why the matter has not been addressed, (in this case her brother in law is causing her problems) is that, even if the clans profess to support widows, regardless if they have children or not or regardless of their age, their loyalties ultimately lie with the male members of their clan and not with the females who are brought into the clan through marriage. Women, after all, can and do go away. Their presence is not permanent.

She feels that her adoptive clan have failed her, be this due to their unwillingness or inability to reprimand her brother in law for his behaviour.<sup>210</sup> Even if she felt obliged, not only to sell her key assets and leave, she is still experiencing problems. She has, after all, committed the social taboo of taking another clan's children with her when she left. As already discussed, socially children are the property of the clan of the father and not the mother, even if their father is deceased. In taking the children with her she has, as noted by

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<sup>210</sup> This unwillingness could also be due to a perception that the clan system has and is becoming weaker, as noted by (Tripp, 2003).

her, stolen her own children.<sup>211</sup> Had the brother in law not challenged social norms (insofar as it is his social duty to not only protect his sister in law, but also his late brother's children as they are members of his clan) then Jenifer would probably still be residing on the lands of her late husband and providing for his children, so implying that she has stolen 'their' children is a clear contradiction. Not wanting her on the land leaves her with minimal choice. Expecting her to be grateful is also a contradiction, as no one owns the land; it is only held in trust.

The narrative from Jenifer also demonstrates that even if a woman, as a widow, accepts another man from the clan of her late husband, this does not mean that she will be protected. This implies that wife inheritance is a tradition that has lost value and in some respects meaning.

*Lisa: "Is the father one of your late husband's brothers or a relative?"*

*Jenifer: "A relative. Now though there is no relationship, all we have is a child. He does not support the child; he is like his brother, lazy and a drunkard. Inheritance is a bad tradition."*

As the man who inherited her is defined as being lazy, it is highly likely that he made no real contribution to her welfare nor to that of her children, this supporting that what men actually do when they inherit a woman is minimal and that they exploit them for sex.

## **6.10 When we leave**

Comparisons are often made between widows and single women, so in this case divorced women. One key difference though between widows who leave the lands of their late husband's and single women, is that, unlike women who leave their husbands or who are 'chased' off the lands of their husbands, widows will leave with whatever they will have accumulated during their marriage and with whatever they have been able to procure since the death of their husband because, unlike single women, they within their home

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<sup>211</sup> Owing to the time constraints of this research, I am not aware if she did seek legal advice. Nor am I aware if she is still experiencing problems from her late husband's family owing to her keeping her children.

theoretically have no one to answer to.<sup>212</sup> In fact, when Jenifer did leave the lands of her late husband, not only did she leave with her children, but she also took with her all of her possessions and, most importantly, her foodstuffs. Thus she was not dependent on the generosity and sympathy of her family when she returned. This is in direct contrast, as I will discuss in Chapter Seven, to single women who return home.

Jenifer's story has illustrated, that women, even if they do have children, are not secure on the lands of their late husbands, especially if they are independent and demonstrate that they do not need the assistance of a man. This is especially the case if they are willing to challenge the gender order and the evident hierarchal structures. In choosing to leave the lands of her late husband, lands to which she is not only socially, but also legally entitled to, she has shown agency, and that she has the ability to choose what is right for her and her children. She has also demonstrated that the clan system has failed and does fail women, and echoed the work of those such as Ryle (2011) who argues that women exist outside of the wider family unit. This is the case, even when the highest authority dictates, as the following illustrates, that widows should be afforded security and respected.

Lisa: *"I've interviewed numerous people and I've interviewed widows, lots of them are finding themselves in the position where they are being forcibly displaced by the male relatives of their deceased husbands. Why is this allowed to happen?"*

Rwot Moses: *"Those are people who do not know what they are doing. They are not being correct."*

Lisa: *"Ok, so if you were presented with a case like this, as the chief how would you deal with this issue?"*

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<sup>212</sup> I am more than aware that there is a great deal of literature that would refute such a claim (see Ntozi, 1997; Eweluka, 2002; Izumi, 2007; Chapoto et al. 2011) Insofar as widows are often unable to retain control over their household assets and that their belongings will be taken by the deceased husband's family. However, in the case of my research, I was not aware that this was evident in the villages. Jenifer, for example, when she left, left with all of her assets, as too did other women that I was fortunate enough to have informal discussions with.

Rwot Moses: *“I would tell them that what they are doing goes against tradition and that they are behaving in a way that is not acceptable to us as Acholi’s. People need not forget that widows are to be respected. If she has a lot of children and the land is big, then I would also advise them that they should give her more land, as she will need it.”*

Even if Rwot Moses emphasises that families who go against the teachings of the Acholi chiefs are supporting an injustice, it is clear that even if the chiefs are to be respected, that in reality, in many cases, they are not. It is in the choosing to ignore the teachings of the chiefs that supports that the clan systems are weakening, (Tripp, 2003) and that it is women who will inevitably experience difficulties when traditional practices are challenged and ignored, especially those that are theoretically supportive of women.

## **6.11 Conclusion**

The primary purpose of this chapter was to debate and discuss the following: how do widows continue to access and retain access to the lands of their late husband? And, how do sexual relations between widows and the male members of their late husband’s family influence a widow’s and her household’s food security?

From the evidence here, I have shown that even if widows should theoretically be afforded continued access to the land of their late husband, be this either due to the traditional and socially accepted norms, (of which there is support from the Paramount Chief and his chiefs and also some men from the villages), or due to state legislation, (most specifically the 1972 Succession Act) that, there are in fact numerous factors that in reality influence this access, of which the following are included: the age of the widow, whether the widow has any living children, and if the widow was married traditionally. Other than these factors, if widows do wish to continue to reside on the ancestral lands of their late husband’s they must be prepared to make certain concessions and conform to the prevailing patriarchal ideologies of the clan and also the patriarchal ideologies of state policies. With regards to the ideologies of the clan, widows must accept that it is the clan who have control over their reproductive system and their sexual

freedom, insofar as they must refrain from entering into sexual relations with a man from outside of their husband's clan. If a widow does choose to do this, then they must be prepared to either fight for and defend their constitutional rights, (though this is only possible if the widow does not marry the man with whom she has entered into a sexual relationship with) but also their traditional rights if their access is threatened or challenged. If she is not able to do this then the only options available to her are to agree to be 'cleansed' or to leave not only her home and her lands, but also in some cases her children.

If a widow is prepared to agree not to enter into sexual relations with a man from outside of her late husband's clan then she has the option of taking a levirate husband and being inherited. With regards to being inherited, even if it was a taken-for-granted social norm, it would appear that some people's attitudes and perceptions of wife inheritance have evolved, (insofar as women are no longer expected to be inherited) not simply because both women and men are aware that a woman no longer needs to be inherited, but primarily because of the impact of HIV/AIDS and also evolving attitudes. Even if this is the case, it is still a reality for some and a reality that some widows still welcome, (albeit reluctantly) as they know it will afford them increased security and status. It is one of the concessions that widows may need to make if they wish to continue to reside on the lands of their late husband's and to justify the payment of bridewealth. Being inherited will also help women who are childless, as it would appear from the data that is presented here that it is children that give widows their status. However, as I have also shown, even if on occasions widows do have children, and the children were legitimate, a widow's ability to maintain access to land that she is socially expected to access may still be challenged. This is specifically the case if a widow is perceived as being more successful than the male members of her late husband's clan. Thus another concession is that, women must remember where they figure on the gender hierarchy and not challenge the masculinities nor the power of these men.

Even if, as noted, state policies are gender blind and support the subordination of widows, these policies are not completely ineffective. There are widows who are able to make claim to their legal and customary rights, though they need to in a position to claim their rights. As noted in Chapter Four, accessing governmental

services and legal advice is difficult, owing to poverty and time constraints that women experience. Also, when a widow does address her problems to the state, she will be going against her husband's clan. At this stage though, all positive relations will have been exhausted.

In relation to a widow's food security, widows, like single women, are often left to their own devices and like single women can experience challenges due to their limited capacity. Widows, though, unlike many single women, do not necessarily lose everything that they have worked for when they lose their husband.<sup>213</sup> That said, I believe a widow's food security is directly related to the gender relations that are evident within the family unit. Most specifically, if widows do not make certain compromises then they will have problems with being able to retain the lands of their late husband. If widows do not have access to land, or the area of land that they have decreases to such an extent that they are unable to farm effectively, then their food security will be undermined. And this is even before all the other factors are taken into consideration, for example access to resources, climate change, etcetera. If widows challenge the gender order, the consequences for them will be negative; that is unless they are prepared to fight, as was the case of Collins. Though, even if widows are prepared to challenge the patriarch or other male members of their late husband's clan, they may not be successful, as Jenifer's story demonstrated. Jenifer was prepared to fight to a certain degree; however when things became unbearable she forfeited her primary resource, her oxen and her rights, so demonstrating the power that men have over widows, even if it is these women who have produced children for their clan.

Having given an overview of the realities of some of the widows whom I interviewed and presented narrative from other research participants, I will now discuss how a single woman's access and maintained access to land is influenced by gender relations and how these gender relations influence a single woman's capacity to be food secure.

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<sup>213</sup> This is something that I will come back to in Chapter Seven.

## **Chapter Seven-Single Women**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the lives of single women who participated in this research. Unlike Chapter Five, which specifically looked at what married women are expected to and must do so that they can continue to access and reside upon the ancestral lands of their husbands, this chapter is concerned with how gender relations influence a single woman's access and maintained access to land when they return either to the ancestral lands of their father (or the patriarch of their ancestral family) once a marriage or relationship has ended. Emphasis is given to women who return to the lands of their father, because socially women are aware that they have some entitlement to access the lands of the generational patriarch or the custodian of their natal lineages ancestral lands. Also, owing to the limited options available to women in the villages of Adunu and Kom, it is simply assumed that if a marriage or relationship ends that they will go back home, especially if the land is in abundance. It is these lands that will afford single women a place to live and also a place where they can produce food and in some cases raise their children.

In relation to my research, only one of the single women whom I interviewed had contemplated going anywhere else or leading an independent life away from her family once she had either left her husband or been chased away. The reason why one of the interviewees did not return to the lands of her father immediately after she left her husband was because she was too embarrassed and ashamed. She, like others whom I interviewed, was a victim of domestic violence.

This is a chapter that also aims to analyse how the gender relations that are evident between single women and the patriarch and other members of her natal family influence a single woman's food security. The chapter also looks at the ability of women to be productive farmers.



## **7.2 Structure of the chapter**

This chapter, is presented thematically according to discussions in the interviews. Firstly it discusses why a marriage and or relationship may have ended and the justifications for why a woman may leave a marriage or why a man may deem it appropriate to 'chase' his wife away. The second theme is concerned with how single women access land and what influences this access. It is specifically concerned with the gender relations that are evident within the villages and how patriarchal practices favour men, especially if land is in short supply. It also, however, proposes that women have smaller areas of land, not only because of their gender, but because of their limited labour capacity (Carr, 2008).

As with married women, it also discusses what they, as single women need to and should do if they wish to continue to reside on the lands of the generational patriarch. The third theme examines how single women perceive food security and what factors influence this.

As with Chapters Five and Six, the data presented are predominantly from the interviews conducted whilst I was in the field. However, unlike in Chapters Five and Six, I have given greater emphasis to several of the interviews as I believe they give an accurate impression of the realities of single women who reside in the villages.

## **7.3 A man's divorce and a woman's divorce**

For there to be single women who are classified as being returnees, there needs to have been a breakdown in either a marriage or a cohabiting relationship. Even if socially divorce and or separation are frowned upon, being separated or divorced is a realistic possibility. When a divorce does take place, both of the families need to meet. It is at this time that any bridewealth will be repaid. A written document acknowledging the end of the marriage will also be produced.

As with marriage, when there is a divorce and or separation, there are evident inequalities between women and men. This is the case due to traditional

practices favouring men, and also, as noted in Chapter Four, to the rules and laws of the state. In relation to the ending of a customary marriage, women are not traditionally permitted to initiate a divorce. That is unless there are extreme circumstances, of which the following are classified and socially accepted as such. Firstly, if one's husband turns out to be a wizard and or witch doctor, (i.e. a man who it is believed can curse others). Secondly, if he is a thief, and thirdly, if he is a repeated wife beater and the wife's life is at risk. Emphasis here is on the word repeated. Under no circumstances are women permitted to end a marriage simply because they perceive their husband not to be a good person, nor if their husband is ineffective in the gardens. If a woman were to initiate divorce, then the burden of proof lies with her. She must be able to convince her husband's kin and his and her clan that there are grounds for a divorce. Even if she is granted the right to divorce her husband, her estranged husband and his family can demand that the bridewealth that was paid for her be returned (Ellis et al., 2006).<sup>214</sup> This is also the case, even if she was a victim of domestic violence. If the family do not repay the bridewealth then she will continue to be 'legally' bound to her husband, thus implying that socially the conjugal patriarch still has ultimate control over their estranged wife.<sup>215</sup> If she were to remarry then the bridewealth that was paid by her family to her ex-husband would need to be repaid. Bridewealth clearly favours men at so many levels. As discussed in Chapter Five, there are benefits in payment of bridewealth for some women. However, it is a process that binds a woman to a man and his family for life, and, as noted, this is even applicable when a marriage ends. Bridewealth is possibly the ultimate manifestation of patriarchy.

A man can initiate a divorce, far more easily, and there are multiple reasons that can be used to justify why a marriage should be terminated. Of these the following are included: if the wife is deemed to be unfaithful, (women, unlike

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<sup>214</sup> Though as I have indicated in Chapter Four, this had recently been challenged in the courts.

<sup>215</sup> For an example of the complexities that surround divorce in another area of Uganda please see <http://www.newvision.co.ug/news/663624-blind-man-accused-of-wife-snatching.html>

men, are not socially permitted to have relationships outside of the marriage), if they are perceived as having an alcohol problem, neglecting themselves, the children and the home, or if they are 'lazy' and do not produce enough food for themselves and the family, thus neglecting one of their principle gender roles. Refusing to let their husband take another wife and, finally, not performing their wifely duties, of which sexual intercourse is one and producing children is another.<sup>216</sup>

A husband and his family can also insist that their bridewealth is paid back, thus a divorce can be initiated if a chronic or terminal illness, of which HIV is one, was not disclosed during courtship and or upon marriage.<sup>217</sup> Other than this, a divorce can also be granted if a woman commits incest. Incest is not only related to a sexual relationship between parent and a child, a brother and sister, but between a female and a male member of the same clan, thus why marriages and relationships in the Acholi region are exogamous. It should be noted that the justifiable reasons for a divorce under traditional practices are in stark contrast to those that are included and referred to under Chapter 249 of the Divorce Act.<sup>218</sup> Divorce, as legislated by the state, is highly patriarchal and favours men, as all they need to do to initiate a divorce is to prove that their wife has been unfaithful.<sup>219</sup> Divorce, however, in the customary sense, is taken to another level as it challenges the gender roles of a woman and her ability to be able to carry these out. For example, how is 'lazy' defined and why should a husband be able to have control over a wife's reproductive capacities? They have control because it is a rigid patriarchal society and men believe that it is their right to control their wives' reproductive capacities and also to define them as either being effective workers or incompetent. This is

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<sup>216</sup> Several of the women that I interviewed were 'chased' away because they did not provide their husband and his clan with male children.

<sup>217</sup> Owing to a woman's inferior position in society it is easy for a husband to blame his wife when HIV is diagnosed instead of taking responsibility for their actions. There is an abundance of evidence that stipulates that it is easier for men to give women HIV than for them to be infected by women (See Izumi, 2007).

<sup>218</sup> See <http://www.ulii.org/ug/legislation/consolidated-act/249> for copy of the Divorce Act.

<sup>219</sup> As customary marriages are overseen by customary laws, the laws of the state do not apply to this type of marriage. Thus, neither do laws that pertain to divorce. State legislation is quiet on the dissolution of such marriages (Birabwa-Nsubuga, 2007).

even if, as I have discussed, women do have rights to their husbands' lands and they have some power over crops that are produced. Ultimately men have control and power over women. This is, as noted in Chapter Five, something that comes from the top of the clan structure. Even if this is the case and women are socially not encouraged to leave their husbands, nor divorce them, there are women who do leave.

#### 7.4 Leaving the home

There are several married women whom I interviewed (see Chapter Five) who were adamant that it is not women who leave a relationship; rather it is the conjugal patriarch who 'chases' their wife and or companion off the land. Given all the traditional 'justifiable' reasons for ending a marriage by a husband this comes as no surprise. However, as I discovered whilst conducting this research, even if there are single women who were 'chased' away by their husbands, there were also women who had left the marital home.

Women, as previously indicated, do not leave a relationship because they do not think that there is respect nor equality within the relationship. Nor do they end a marriage if their husband has had an affair. For a woman to leave her husband and permanently end a relationship and thus break the ties between the two clans, there must be a serious threat to the woman herself.<sup>220</sup> From the data that I collected, all of the women that I interviewed who had left their husbands had left because of domestic violence.<sup>221,222</sup>

Mary: *"I left because I was seriously beaten by my husband. I had no choice but to flee; I just had to escape him, and he was too violent to me. Before I came home, I went somewhere else. I could not let my family see me in that condition. He even broke one of my ribs".*

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<sup>220</sup> If women are having problems, they may return home briefly. Once the problems are resolved they will go back to their husbands.

<sup>221</sup> I use the word husband to refer to both those who have been married customarily and those who were never married, but classify their partners as being their husbands.

<sup>222</sup> This is not to say that women do not leave for other reasons. However, my data strongly indicates that women only leave and leave permanently if there are issues of domestic violence and their life may be under threat.

Susan: *“There was a lot of tension between me and my current husband. When this baby was two months young in my stomach, he treated me very badly. He beat me and the situation was very bad. I just had to leave.”*

Sandra: *“He is a bodaboda; he would come back from work and start an argument.”<sup>223</sup> He would start to fight with me. He was violent and violent for no reason. He wasn’t very good to me. I told my family what was going on and they decided that I needed to leave him. They told me that I needed to come home.”*

Alice: *“My husband turned on me, he beat me, he started treating me really badly, so badly in fact that when my brother heard what was happening to me he came to my husband’s land. He came and got me, he brought me back here, and he brought me home.”<sup>224</sup> Because I was treated so badly, he even said they could have the dowry back. In the end it wasn’t very much, just some little money and some animals.”*

The prevalence of domestic violence was also alluded to by the Sub County Chief:

*“ If you are having problems with your husband and maybe his family, sometimes it is better just to go home because if you don’t go home, you might be killed. That can happen.”*

From the quotes above, there are several things that are of interest. Firstly, it is clearly evident that domestic abuse and violence is a reality for many women living in the villages where I conducted my research, be they married

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<sup>223</sup> A bodaboda is the word commonly used to refer to motorbike taxi drivers.

<sup>224</sup> Supposedly, the reason why Alice’s husband turned on her was because she gave birth to twins. As no one had given birth to twins before in her husband’s family, her mother in law questioned her. For her mother-in-law it was unnatural.

in the customary sense or co-habiting with their partners.<sup>225,226</sup> This confirms, as discussed in Chapter Two, that domestic violence is common in the northern Uganda (Malinga & Ford, 2010). Domestic violence is possible because of inequalities in gender relations, and also because socially it is rarely condemned explicitly, be this by the family or the clan.<sup>227</sup> As noted, under the justifiable reasons why a woman may divorce her husband, domestic violence needs to be a common occurrence. If not, then it is not a justifiable reason for a woman to leave her husband. It is clear that women only leave when they are desperate and when they feel that they can no longer take the abuse inflicted upon them. Domestic abuse is an assertion of power and dominance over women (Walby, 1990) and it also helps support subordinate femininities (Connell, 1987; 2001; 2005; 2009).

What is also interesting from the above narratives, especially that of Alice, is that the male members of a single woman's family will sometimes intervene if they see that their sisters and or daughters are being neglected or physically abused. They do this even if they are aware of the social consequence and what it may cost them in terms of repaying back any bridewealth that may have been paid to them for their sister or daughter. This contradicts the assertion that it is rarely challenged.

I would like to argue that it is highly likely that the woman whose experiences are mentioned above will have been disempowered whilst married, owing to the fact that they have been subjected to and experienced abuse.<sup>228</sup> However, in taking the difficult decision to leave the husband they are empowered (Kabeer, 1999). By leaving an abusive husband, women gain a degree of control over their own lives. It is this ability to choose that gives a single woman increased agency, as discussed by Sen (1985). Leaving an

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<sup>225</sup> I was not in a position to ask the husbands of these women why they deemed it appropriate to abuse and beat their wives. This is something that I would have liked to have asked.

<sup>226</sup> Bridewealth was not paid for either Susan, or Sandra.

<sup>227</sup> Whilst I was conducting my research, three women were murdered by their respective partners. (All over the same weekend) Two of whom were beaten to death and another was stabbed whilst bathing.

<sup>228</sup> Women are already disempowered when they enter into a marriage owing to patriarchal norms. However, domestic abuse is a horrific abuse of power by men and it is an abuse that further disempowers women.

abusive husband also allows women to regain a sense of themselves and their own individual identity. This, as noted by Burnet (2000), is difficult for married women in patriarchal societies as they are often expected to take the identity of their husbands. In choosing to leave an abusive spouse women are acknowledging that they will be going against and challenging the social norms of the community and also challenging the masculinities of their husband. This is something that was supported by Ben.

*“You need to understand it isn’t easy for a woman to return home. There can be a lot of shame for the woman when they come home, no one wants to have a failed marriage. It’s hard when they have to leave the children and sometimes we even have to pay the dowry back, dowry that will have been spent, will have been used for a brother.”*

Not only this, but woman must be prepared to face the social stigma that is attached to leaving their husbands and also, as discussed, be prepared to repay any bridewealth that will have been paid. Women may also need to leave their children behind. Even if they are faced with these challenges and losses, it appears that it is a choice worth making, especially if a woman’s life is at risk.

## **7.5 A brief return**

Not all women who return home will stay, however. If there are problems in a relationship, but the problems are not too serious then the woman’s family may actively encourage her to go back to the husband, especially if bridewealth has been paid. Furthermore, as already discussed in Chapter Five, some women will return to their husbands, even if there are problems because it is difficult for them to be away from their children.

*Betty: “They like me had also come home, but unlike me they went back to their husbands; they were only here for a short time. Women do that here, if there are problems at home, so with their husbands then they come back to the home of the parents, when the troubles and problems are over then they go*

*back to their husband's families. We always try to encourage a woman to go back to her husband as that is where women belong, especially if a dowry has been paid."*

There is clearly pressure placed on women who have had bridewealth paid for them to return to their husbands as, upon the payment, they technically belong to another clan. Also, as marriage is held in such high esteem, it is important that women do not challenge this and that they continue to abide by the set gendered order, unless their life is at risk.

## **7.6 Single women and land access**

Even if women will face social stigma and their value and status as women within society will be challenged, they still choose to leave. They do so because they are socially aware that they may be afforded protection from their ancestral clan. It is this protection that also includes the allocation of resources, of which land is one. The following discussion therefore will consider the position of women as single members of a family and how they access land upon their return to their ancestral families.

As previously noted in both Chapters Two and Three, in areas of Uganda where traditional land practices prevail, the Acholi region included, every member of a family, male or female, married or single, is socially entitled to access land, be this through their father or (in the case of women) their husbands. Even if this is the case, a great deal of the prevailing literature indicates that single women's rights and claims are often negated when it comes to accessing traditional lands. Owing to this, I wanted to find out what the reality was in the villages where I conducted my research. Did the male members of a single woman's family actually allocate them land as is traditionally expected? In order to do this I asked not only men and women from the villages, but also the local Rwot.



Ben: *“from tradition we should always protect our sisters. They should always be given land for themselves and if they bring their children back, also for their children.”*

Rwot Moses: *“When a woman returns home, she will be given land, she will be told that she can cultivate the land of her father, that she can cultivate the land for ever. That is her land. It is up to her to grow her crops, to feed herself; it is her land.”*

Paulina: *“According to Acholi culture, they are the ones who should give me the gardens. You plough here; you cultivate here, this one. Tradition demands that I should be allowed to stay and to settle, to feed my children.”*

It is clear from the above quotations that women are socially and traditionally expected to be welcomed back to their ancestral lands when there has been a breakdown in a marriage. Not only this, it is also expected that they will be given access to the ancestral lands of their father. It is these lands that a woman will need to use so that she can support not only herself, but also her children. This, as noted, is of great importance, (in a poor and underdeveloped agrarian society), and it suggests that there is a certain degree of gender equity within families. Furthermore, if we are to accept what Rwot Moses says, it would appear that those women who return are afforded a certain degree of freedom, autonomy and rights. Specifically they should have secure and maintained access to land and the sole responsibility in deciding what is grown on the land that they have access to. It is these freedoms that they may not have been able to have (see Chapter Five) when they were married. This level of autonomy echoes what Chat (2007; 1997) proposes, insofar as some women who reside in FHH have greater rights than those who are married.

However, as noted by Paulina, a single woman's access to land, like that of a married woman, is contingent on the relationship that they have with the male members of their family. And, as I will discuss, women are expected to make numerous concessions if they want to, as Rwot Moses implies, stay on the land forever. The concessions that a single woman is expected to make, that

is if she wants access to her own gardens, are presented in the following extract.

George, Head of Twero Clan:

*“Yes, here we treat our daughters equally. If they come home they are entitled to the same size of land as the men here, as their brothers. This is what I have been telling our daughters here today, that if they come home they will be treated equally. But for us to give you that piece of land, you must be able to satisfy us, the family, that you are really divorced and that you will not leave this home again, that you will not go back to your husband.”<sup>229</sup> As a family, we need to make sure that no one will take the land away from us, that no man will take the land away from our women. If a woman comes home when she is divorced she needs to be serious. She needs to realise that another man cannot come and live here with her. If she wants another man, then she will need to go to that man’s land. We cannot risk another man from another clan being on our land. If she, a woman, goes back to her husband; she loses the rights to this land, to our land as she cannot take the land with her. If she is with her husband or another man, they will have land, and that is the land that she will need to use.”*

It is clear from the above narrative that a single woman must be able to demonstrate and show that they have no intentions of returning to their husband. Until women are able to demonstrate that they have no intentions of leaving, they will be expected to work on the lands of their mother or another member of their family. Women become once again a minor. Women will be given an area of land where they can construct a house, but not their own gardens. Being given access to their own gardens is a question of time. I

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<sup>229</sup> The interview with George was scheduled for 10am. When I arrived a family meeting was taking place. It is common that such meetings happen in the dry season and also when the schools are closed for the holidays. One of the issues on the agenda at the family meeting was how returnee women should be treated and what they should expect from their families. All of the women were seated on the floor, whereas the men were on chairs. Owing to the intensity of the meeting and its length, I had to wait until 3pm to interview George.

would argue that one of the reasons why women need to wait is that it is a way of the ancestral patriarch reaffirming and demonstrating his power and control over women and that it is done as a reminder that women are never free from the control of a patriarch.

One such woman who was in this position was Susan. Susan lost her first husband when she was living in Puranga IDP camp. Owing to problems with her mother in law she left the camp and went and resided with her father in another area of the north. She was with him from 2006 until 2009. During this time she had a child, though she never resided with the child's father. When it was deemed safe to go back to the village of Kom, Susan returned to her ancestral home. Upon returning, instead of being given her own land to cultivate for herself and her children, she was expected to help her mother. In May 2012 she left the ancestral lands of her father and went and co-habited with a married man. She stayed there until June 2013. It was during this time that she had another child. It was only in early 2014 that Susan was given a place in her mother's compound so she could build a home for herself and her children. She was given this area of land as she had demonstrated to her father that she had no intention of leaving the ancestral lands again.

With regards to proving that women are actually serious and that they are divorced, this, as noted for many women, is difficult, as unless the bridewealth has been repaid, single women are still socially seen as being under the control of their husbands. Nonetheless, as George implies, unless a woman can satisfy this condition then their intent to remain on the lands of their father will not be taken seriously. Not only do women need to demonstrate that they will not return to their husband, but as single women they must also be prepared to make several concessions, one of which being that as a single woman she will not allow a man to reside with her on her lands. If women do choose to enter into another relationship, then they should leave. Even if George has stressed that there is equity in land access, there most definitely is not equality. If there were, then single women who wanted to engage in a sexual relationship with men other than their estranged or ex- husband and have them reside with them would be able to so. In addition, if women were equal, then even if they did decide to remarry they would be able to continue

to access their ancestral lands. I would argue that by not allowing a man to reside with the returnee women that it is a way of controlling a single woman's sexuality (Mackintosh, 1977; McDonhga & Hammer, 1979; Sticher & Parpart, 1988; Budhiraja et al., 2009; Tamale, 2009 ).

### **7.7 Sexual freedom**

One way of challenging sexual repression is to have, as referred to by Moser (1993), a guest husband. Several of the women whom I interviewed, especially those who are classified as being young and of childbearing age, had guest husbands. As discussed in Chapter Two (Berger, 1999), there are several reasons why women are consciously choosing not to get married, or remarry. Using the data that I obtained in the field I will expand on the work of Berger. I propose that there are several other reasons why women consciously chose to have guest husbands rather than to leave the ancestral homes of their fathers. Firstly, if women have already had a negative experience with a husband, as a woman you may not be willing to risk finding yourself again in a disadvantaged position, thus women may prefer to stay at home. Secondly, if you were not in a position to repay the bridewealth then women may not want to move on to the lands of a new man unless they have been married in the traditional sense, as woman are aware that unless bridewealth has been paid the rights that they have to their partner's land are minimal. Thirdly, socially women are expected to produce as many children as possible. If a woman is vulnerable and feels pressured she may feel obliged to engage in sexual activity without using contraception, as is often the case in rural areas where poverty is high and access to contraception is limited and, as discussed, not socially accepted (see Chapter Four).

When a woman demonstrates that she has no intention of leaving the lands that she, as a single woman, has been given access to, their socially constructed femininities, thus gender roles, are also challenged. Single women maybe expected to take on and embrace a more 'masculine' role within the family and within the institution of the clan, as the following excerpt shows.

Mary: *“If you are a lady who has returned home, if you have decided that you will not go anywhere, and that you will never remarry, that you will not bring another man onto this land, then, that is how it is done. That you will live, work and die here. You become a man. You are registered in the book of the clan, as a man.”*<sup>230</sup> *You need to do what a man would do.”*

Women may be expected to embrace a more masculine role. However, they are by no means seen as equal to men as the process of being classified as being a man is intrinsically related to the concessions that women are prepared to make, most notably not to remarry and not allowing another man to live with them on their land. It is these concessions that show that single women are still ultimately under the control of the patriarchal ideologies of the institution that is the clan (Connell, 2009; Walby, 1990).

#### **7.8 Returnees’ access to land**

In relation to returnee women being given the same amount of land as the male members of their family, as proposed by George, it is an individual’s circumstances that influence and dictate what size of land they are given access to and also how much land is available to the family as a whole. The factors that influence what a single woman can have access to are as follows:

- ∂ Their previous marital status; if they were married customarily or if they co-habited. This is directly related to the number of children that they are expected to return with and whether the children will stay with their mother.
- ∂ If the land has already been distributed.
- ∂ The size of the family’s land.
- ∂ The composition of the families of the men who reside on the land.

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<sup>230</sup> This is not common practice amongst the Twero clan.

- o If there is a chance that she will leave again, as women are socially expected to marry or co-habit.

### **7.8.1 Land size and timing of return**

In relation to the size of land that single women should be given access to and also to the timing of a woman's return and their place in the gender hierarchy, Rwot Moses explains what single women should be given access to and why.

Rwot Moses: *"On your father's land you will only be given land that will sustain you. After all, your brother has a family, he has a wife. You're not supposed to be there, so you get what is left, you just get enough."*

From the above quote there are two areas that warrant discussion. Firstly, Rwot Moses, as discussed previously, is not denying that single women should be given access to land. After all, they are traditionally entitled to access the lands of their fathers. What is interesting though is the perceived position that women are afforded within the family unit as a whole. Women are not supposed to reside on the lands of the ancestral patriarch as their role in life is to marry and leave. It is clear that the needs of single women come after those of the male members of the family. This is reflected in the size of plot that they should be given access to, which, as noted by Rwot Moses, is just enough for their basis needs. Women, it could be concluded, cannot expect to come home and have the same as their brothers as such expectations could challenge and destabilise family dynamics, this echoing what has been proposed in Chapter Two. As I will discuss, the size of land that some women get access to may also be influenced by the composition of a woman's household, if she returns home with children and whether those children belong to her ancestral clan, or to the clan of her husband.

Women are often allocated a smaller area of land than their brothers and the other male relatives of their family. This was a reality for Sandra.<sup>231</sup>

Lisa: *“Do you know why they have more gardens than yourself?”*

Sandra: *“The reason is, I have not been here. I was not around, so when I came back, I got them already cultivating those gardens. I was just given what was left.”*

Lisa: *“Is it quite common for women who return home just to be given whatever land is left, to be given less?”*

Sandra: *“I think so, yes. That is my case, yes. It depends on the family though, some families are better than others. It also depends on who lives on the land and how much land a family has. Girls though, always have problems. People think we are in transit; that we move. Me though, I want to stay here, I don’t want to go anywhere.”*

Even if no bridewealth was paid by Sandra’s family to her former partner’s family, when land was allocated to the male members of her family, her possible need for land was negated. This implies that, even if bridewealth is *not* paid, women are expected to remain on the lands of their partner and not return. Sandra clarifies that what women get access to is contingent on there being enough land and also on who else resides on the ancestral land. What Sandra says supports and also suggests that even if women do return home they are still vulnerable as there are social expectations on them to once again leave. Such pressure increases if they are young.

The size of land that is available to a family was also mentioned by Ben.

Ben: *“Like I have told you, we have a lot of land. That is why the women have the same as us. If the land was smaller than it may be different, but it isn’t, so they have a lot of land.”*

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<sup>231</sup> Sandra is a 25 year old single mother of three.

What I find of interest from the above quote, from the interview that was conducted with Ben, is that he is aware that if there are land shortages that it is women who have returned home who will experience problems and not the male members of a family. It almost feels like these women are being punished for their relationship failing, even if they may have experienced repeated incidents of domestic abuse. This, once again, shows how men will always take precedence over women, as their needs are deemed to be greater than those of women. If women do return and there are issues to do with land, (i.e. there is not enough for them as either the area of land is small or it has already been allocated to the other members of the family), they are not permitted to access land that has been demarcated or designated to their brothers. This is the case, even if women return home with children. The following quotation shows this:

Lisa: *"Do you have any rights to the land of your brothers?"*

Gladness: *"Of course not. I have no rights. It is their wives, their women who have rights over the land."*

Clearly, preference is given to the male members of a family and their families. Returning women just have to hope that they are given something. That said, what Gladness says also shows that the needs of culturally married women are of relevance and importance and, that there is a distinct hierarchy among women, as there is among men. In essence, one woman's loss is another's gain.

To show what can happen to women who return home when land is at a premium I will now give an overview of an interview that I conducted with Acii.

## **7.9 Case study Acii**

Acii is a 30 year old divorcee with four children.<sup>232</sup> Three of her children technically belong to the clan of her ex-husband, but all of the children that were conceived during this relationship reside with her on the ancestral lands of her family. She, like other single women, receives no financial support from her ex-husband and neither does he have contact with his children. Acii's

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<sup>232</sup> The bridewealth that was paid to her ex-husbands family was repaid.



family, unlike others in the village, does not have a large area of land. The land that her family has was from the clan of her mother and not her father. As with Sandra, when land was allocated to the male members of her family Acii was not included in the allocation as she had already married and left the ancestral home. Thus, when she was forced to return home due to domestic violence she was given only a small plot of land on which she was able to construct a house. Because of the pressures on land she was not given any areas of land to cultivate. Therefore, the gardens that she uses to cultivate crops are rented from other people within the village.

*Acii: "My brothers have boys. My eldest brother has two boys, boys who are married. When I asked him for land, he just told me that the land is for his sons. He told me that their needs are greater. He told me that I am a woman in transit, and that I may leave at any time, and that it is a waste to give me land. He told me I should go to the land of the father of my last born. Even my mother should have supported me; she should have given me land, but even she hasn't. Recently my sister came home because she was having problems with her husband, but she was told to go back to resolve her problems because here there is no land for her. This sister also has a son, a son from another man, a man who never paid for her; she had him when she was young. Because she was never paid for, this boy is a part of this clan. He was given some little land, but me, I get nothing. For me he was given my land. Here the boys and men get what they need; we women get nothing. ....you're only a girl, there is no respect in our culture for women. We are here to have children and to look after the men. We are not supposed to have land if men need it."*

There are several issues raised in the above narrative that are of relevance to this thesis. It is clear from Acii's account that if land is at a premium then women who return to their ancestral homes could be very vulnerable, especially if they were married in the traditional sense, as socially they belong to their husband and his clan. As previously discussed, for a woman to leave

her husband there needs to be a justifiable reason. As I will discuss, for some women who return home if they are told that there is no place for them and that they must return to their husband, this can be very difficult and even fatal, especially if land has been allocated to the younger males of the family, (in this case nephews). This shows and supports that patriarchal inheritance takes precedence, even if it means denying women, who socially and culturally are meant to be entitled to access the lands of their fathers. It also demonstrates Connell's notion (see Chapter Two) of a gender hierarchy. As Acii states, it is the men who get what they need in the Acholi culture and not the women.

As bridewealth was not paid by the father of Acii's youngest child, I find it intriguing that her brother asked her to go back to him. As an Acholi man, he will be more than aware that if bridewealth was not paid, his sister will be open to various forms of abuse and will never have secure access to the land of her last child's father. (This may indicate that, as proposed by Tripp (2002), traditional practices are eroding) Also her other children would be unable to go with her as they are not of his clan. With regards to her mother not being in a position to help her, or not wishing to help her, I would argue that it is possible that her mother herself has minimal land. As if she has sons, she may have already given out her plots, so she will be left with little. This was definitely the case for another elderly woman that I met. After years, all she was left with, once land had been allocated to her two sons and their sons' families, was a small plot.

What Acii says at the end of the above quote is possibly realistic. Women are vessels; their role is to have children, to provide for these children and bring them up and also look after the men within their family. However, they must not interfere with the gender hierarchy. This definitely resonates with patriarchal ideologies and also shows the gendered roles of women. Acii's case shows that, even if women should be given land, that they will only be given land if there is enough for the males of the family. It is only then that they would be allocated any land. In an agrarian society where options of buying land are negligible, women are left with few options, other than to marry or live with another man.

Acii continued to tell me what had happened to another sister of hers. This was a sister who was also informed that there was no place for her on the ancestral lands of her family.

*“I had another sister who was married. Because she did not give birth to any children her husband divorced her. He didn’t want her because she could not bear children. It was never understood if it was him or her who did not work as they should. Her husband, though, blamed her. When she came home, she was told there was no place for her here; she wasn’t even given a compound. At least I was given that. She didn’t know what to do with herself. It was so bad that she went to Karuma.<sup>233</sup> She took a lot of medicine and killed herself. She took her own life. Me, I blame my brothers, they should have given her somewhere to stay. I blame her husband also for not wanting her”.*

Not bearing children is, as discussed, an acceptable justification for a divorce, even if it may not be the woman who is unable to conceive. Even if the problem with conceiving is not with the women, if women have not been able to fulfil their gender role as mother, then they are of no use to the clan of their husband as they will have failed to provide them with children. The improved status that women acquire upon marriage is stripped away if they do not have children. Women who find themselves in these situations are extremely vulnerable, as the above quote shows, especially if their ancestral families reject them. It is clear that when faced with the prospect of destitution that women feel desperate, so desperate in fact that some are prepared to take their own lives. It is clear that when there are resource constraints that those who will be affected will be women, but most specifically women who return home.

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<sup>233</sup> Karuma is approximately 143kilometers South of Adunu.

## 7.10 The relevance of children

The size of land that women get is not only contingent on there being firstly enough for the male members of a family, but the amount of land to which women get access can also be determined by the number of children that they have and if the children belong to the ancestral clan of the mother or to the clan of their father. Children are clearly a resource, especially if the children are of the clan of the mother and not of the father.

Akena also held that single women had access to land. However, Akena is very clear that if a women returns with her children, that they should be sent back to the lands of their own fathers as they are from another clan.<sup>234</sup> Thus they have no rights to reside on the ancestral lands of their mother's father. This, as discussed in Chapter Six, is one of the reasons why many married women cannot leave a marriage. I will discuss the significance of this in detail in the food security section below.

*Akena: "in case a woman fails her marriage, and comes back, a portion of the land should be given to the woman to live on. But the children who are brought from another clan, they should go and inherit their land from there".*

This is a sentiment that was also supported by Akobo:

*"When women go back home, they get land. But no, they do not get the same size portion as the men on the land, as her brothers. As a sister a woman may come back alone, she will come home without her children. If that is the case then she doesn't need a lot of land; she might also go away again. It is not possible for a clan to keep another clan's children".*

It is clear that the size of land that women will be given access to, is also contingent on the number of children that they have and also if the children are of the clan of the mother or the clan of the ex-husband. The quote below from Akidi states,

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<sup>234</sup> As noted for the children to belong to the clan of the father, bridewealth needs to have been paid. If it has not been paid then the children belong to the clan of the mother.

*“If you have not been married, but you are having children from a relationship, the father of those children has no rights; they have no rights over these children. It is your people who will have the control over these children, so it is the responsibility of the brothers, the men, to give you as a woman with children where the father has no control, access to land, you need somewhere where you can feed your children. These children are your brother’s responsibility as the father’s family mean nothing”.*

If the children belong to their mother’s clan, then the male relatives of the returning women have a responsibility to assist not only their sister, daughter or niece, but also her children. This may be one of the reasons why families prefer it if bridewealth is paid, as that way, if something does go wrong within a marriage they will not find themselves responsible for any children that have been produced during that marriage.

#### **7.10.1 Capacity**

However, it is not always the case that women are only given what is left, or that they are given only what they need for themselves, as the following excerpt and discussion explains. What women have access to is also related to the physical and labouring capacity of the woman and what they can cope with,

*Lisa: “So that I can understand. The reason why you have four gardens and only use four gardens is due to you not having the capacity to cultivate any more gardens? It has nothing to do with how your brother allocated the land?”*

*Akidi: “It is only my capacity that is limited. My brother has no problems with me. We have land, lots of it. He would give me more.”*

The following excerpt is from an interview that I conducted with Akulu.<sup>235</sup>

Lisa: *“So, you think then that your brothers have more access to land because they have a greater capacity to work the land?”*

Akulu: *“Yes, they have more capacity than me.”*

Lisa: *“So for you they have more land because they have more capacity, not because they are men?”*

Akulu: *“Here if you are a female headed household, you cannot cultivate large varieties of crops. Men have more capacity and in general men are always given more land. They are given more land as that is tradition. Us women could and do leave. We move from home to home, that is our way.”*

Akulu, like other single women that I interviewed, is well aware that women like herself are in transit and that they may leave the lands of their ancestral family at any time. She is also aware that traditional practices favour men, owing to prevailing patriarchal norms. However, as both Akidi and Akulu propose, the main reason why neither of them has the same size land as their brothers is not due to their being women, but is related to their capacity to be able to farm the land productively, especially given the taboo on women ploughing. This is an area that I will refer back to in the following food security section.

### **7.10.2 Maintaining a positive relationship with the patriarch.**

As noted, tradition dictates that all women should be able to access the ancestral lands of their fathers. That is, of course, if there is enough land.<sup>236</sup> However, as for married women, a single woman's continued access to the

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<sup>235</sup> As previously discussed, Akulu was only given access to land recently.

<sup>236</sup> Yes, traditionally all single women should be given land. However, even if this is the case, if there isn't enough land those who will go without are single women who return home.

land of the generational patriarch or their brother may still be and can be under threat. It is important that single women who return home remember their place in the gender hierarchy and that if they do encounter any problems with the male members of their family that they address these issues with the elders of their clan and not with Governmental authorities. The justification for this, is that matters should be dealt with by the family. This echoes what Oosterom (2011) implies in his work. To go against the family, would be seen by some as a betrayal (however, as I have shown in Chapter Six, some women are willing to risk being classified as being traitors, especially when they know that they are in the right) and also there is a general distrust towards the Government. This is a distrust that is, as I was informed by many people, due to the legacy of war. The Acholi still feel removed from Museveni and his Government. Maintaining a positive and functioning relationship with the male members of the family is also important. The following quotes show this:

Betty: *"Much as I am the eldest sister, if I start to say that I am the one in charge of this land, they can choose to chase me away from this land."*

Lisa: *"Because it is the men who traditionally inherit land, do you feel obliged to sustain a positive relationship with your brothers?"*

Akulu: *"If the elder who will inherit this land is still a good leader then there will be no problems with me being on this land. But if he takes sides and treats the boys, his sons, more favourably than us women, then yes, there may be problems. I suppose that yes, it is important to sustain a positive relationship with my brothers as it is they who are the heads."*

The patriarch may deem it appropriate to sell the lands where a single woman lives and cultivates her crops, which means that single women may feel very vulnerable. Akech is more than aware that if the patriarch wanted to sell the land that she uses that she would not be able to challenge the decision. Ultimately, she is only a woman and women are socially viewed as being subordinate and inferior to men.

Akech: *"If he wanted to sell land, land which I currently use, my gardens; then yes he should talk to me about it first. If I said I did not want him to sell any of the gardens that I use, he could still refuse to listen to me and could sell the land. After all, I am a girl who has returned home."*

Moreover, when a man wants to sell customary land legally he only needs to discuss such sales with his wife. The fact that land can be sold without the consent of all females in the family shows that state policies are actively supporting inequality and that they are supporting and reinforcing patriarchal inheritance practices and social norms that do not benefit women, other than those who are married.

If women do have problems when they return home, then ideally they should be addressed with members of their clan as it is the clan's responsibility to make sure that they do not go without. Moreover, as noted by Alanyo and Betty, it is perceived as important to address any issues that you have with the clan and not with outsiders, as they are not aware of the local context. Also if a woman goes outside of the clan she will be behaving in a subordinate manner.

Alanyo: *"If I am to leave the clan members to one side and go straight to the Government, this will cause me more problems. It is the clan members who know about this land, not the Government."*

Betty: *"If it was my brothers, then no, you should not argue with your brothers. The elders are there and also the clan are to there to resolve issues. Outsiders should not be involved when the dispute is between family members as they do not understand how things are and how things work."*

Although single women are aware that they are to be given access to the lands of the ancestral patriarch, there are those who, if in the position to do so, will buy land as they are aware that there may be problems. This is specifically of relevance if a woman has returned home with the children of their ex-husband's clan.



### 7.11 Case study Akech

As already indicated, even if wives do work hard in the gardens of their husbands and do not challenge the gender relations that are evident, not only within the household, but also within the wider village and clan context, their ability to access their husband's ancestral lands may still be precarious. This is especially the case if women only give birth to female children as men require males for the continuation of their clan. Two of the single women to whom I talked informed me that their marriages had broken down because they had not given their husbands a male heir. One such woman was Akech.

Unlike other women that I interviewed, Akech has access to a large area of land and she is also in a position to hire oxen as she has a small lockup on the main road.<sup>237</sup> On a yearly basis she will use six gardens, though she does have the possibility to use ten. The reason why she does not use ten is because she is able to produce enough food for her and her children with six. Even if she has always used the same gardens, the land is held communally. Akech is the only woman that I interviewed who bought land in her own right, (this was made possible from the profits that she makes from her lock up and also from foodstuffs that she sells at the local market) and, contrary to what is usual, (see Razavi, 2007; Place, 2009; Carr, 2008; Toulmin, 2008), neither her father nor her brothers were involved in the land acquisition.<sup>238</sup>

There are several reasons why Akech bought land in her own right. Firstly, as she knows that the father of her children will not give them land she feels that it is her responsibility to make sure that her children will have at least a place to call home. She is also aware that in the future her brothers may challenge her right to be able to reside on the ancestral lands of her father.

*Akech: "I sometimes think that in the future, now that the world is changing, they may try to start using the land that I am used to using. That is why I chose to buy another plot, to have my own land. At least I now know that my girl children will be*

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<sup>237</sup> A lock up is a small shop that sells basics such as soap, sugar, soda and some food stuffs.

<sup>238</sup> See Appendix Nine for a copy of the land registration document.

*secure as I have this land; land that no one can take from me as it is mine, legally mine. So if I do have problems with my brothers, we will all have somewhere to stay.”*

As a single woman residing on the ancestral lands of her father she is more than aware that the authority that she has is minimal and that it is the men who ultimately have power and control, especially over the land. This supporting Slavchevska (2015) that headship is subjective and that it is related to perceptions of self-worth.

Akech: *“Men in a home usually put themselves high as they know that they are the ones who have authority. Like, me the level of authority that I have is minimal.”*

Lisa: *“Do you think that that is to do with culture or is it just maybe this area?”*

Akech: *“That is the Acholi tradition, it is an issue of culture, and our culture is very strong.”*

Lisa: *“Do you think then that the traditional Acholi culture puts women at a lower level then, when it comes to accessing land?”*

Akech: *“Even you know that that is the truth. Women here are nothing. It is men who have the power.<sup>239</sup> We rank much lower in all issues of life, land especially.”*

Akech is also aware of the inequalities that her children will face because they are not of her clan.

*“I feel bad, because I am also a member of the family. I really do feel bad about that. It just doesn’t seem right. It’s not fair. My children should be treated like me; they are my children.”*

However, as the quotes above show, she is more than aware that she is not able to challenge traditional practices of land inheritance as she is ultimately

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<sup>239</sup> Akech directed this answer to Mike, my research assistant.

seen as being inferior to the male members of her family. This is also one of the reasons why she has decided to buy land in her own right.

### 7.12 Gender inversion

Perceptions of a woman's gender identity are of importance as it is clear from the following, it is being registered in the book of the Twero clan as a male that gives Helen a sense of security.<sup>240</sup>

Mary: *"I have no problem with the issue of being on this land as I have been registered in the book of our clan as a man. I have been registered as being a man, a man who has the rights over the land. I am seen as a male member of the family because I am on my own. Even when there are compensation claims, I pay like the men; I pay like any man would pay."*<sup>241</sup>

Mary was the only single woman that I interviewed who classified herself as being defined as a man (even if she has the social status of being a mother) Therefore, I do not think it is something that happens on a regular basis, as if it did then I assume all single women would insist on having the same rights as men. One of the reasons why she may be registered as a man, is so that the clan can get money from her household. Mary is also at a particular life stage. Due to her age, (45), she has past the normal age of conceiving children, therefore she is under no obligation to have any more children, and socially, she is now classified as being an elder. It is her age and her marital status that may allow her to take on the role of the 'other' category. Even if she is expected to behave like a man, especially when it comes to paying compensation, unlike men, she is not able to plough.

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<sup>240</sup> It was upon a visit to the lands of her father to visit her sick brother that Mary was advised by her family to move back home to her natal lands. She is unclear as to why she was advised to come home; however, she did indicate that it may have been because she had been living out of the local area.

<sup>241</sup> Compensation claims are claims that are made by another clan if a wrong doing has been committed, examples of which include the murder or manslaughter of a member of another clan. Murder is dealt with by the Uganda judiciary. All members of a clan are still expected to pay compensation if there has been a serious incident.

### 7.13 What does it mean to be food secure for single women?

The previous section discussed how single women access land, and what they are expected to do so that they can continue to reside on the ancestral lands of their father and what influences this access, be this the size of the plots that are available or their ability to demonstrate that they are committed to their birth clan, or indeed their capacity to cultivate the land. The latter is a capacity that is greatly influenced by access to resources other than land, for example, oxen and to the number of children that they have and their ages. This section discusses how single women define food security and how gender relations influence a single woman's food security once they return home.

When talking to single women about what it means for them to be food secure, they, like married women, married men and also widows, emphasise quantity and also staple foods, as the following extracts show:

Lisa: *"Do you think that food security is related to nutrition or just consumption and what you produce?"*

Alanyo: *"It's about what is enough. It's about consumption. What you eat isn't really that important, you need to not be hungry."*

Lisa: *"So it's not about quality and variation; it's about quantity?"*

Alanyo: *"Like I said it's about quantity."*

Similar questions were directed to Betty.

Lisa: *"Do you think that it is important to have other foods in your diet, so let's say tomatoes, cabbages, onions, fruit, and those sorts of things in your diet, or do they just substitute the staples?"*

Betty: *"Those food stuffs are very useful for substituting our diet. We can also go ahead and grow okra. If though we find that during the period for planting crops that we are running short of*

*time, I would concentrate on planting the staple crops and not vegetables as they are more important for my household.”*

The reason why staples are more important than vegetables for the household as a whole is given by Akulu:

*“You can only grow small portions of them. They don’t last very long and you can’t earn very much money from them. The yield is also small. But if you compare the money that you raise from selling grains, well the grains have more value.”*

What Akulu says shows that single women need to make choices as to what they should grow and that these choices are related to economics and the sustainability of the foods that she produces. Also, I would argue, this relates to the time that one has to dedicate to working in the gardens. A single woman’s time needs to be used effectively as if it is not then she may not harvest what is needed for her and her family. It is also clearly evident that the foods that she grows are not only for household food consumption, but also for sale. A single woman needs to grow foods that will sustain not only her household’s needs, but also put her in a position whereby she can generate some much needed income. It is this income that will be used to pay for their children’s schooling and also for everyday essentials that all households need. As already discussed, the financial burden for bringing up children is on single mothers as men do not contribute either their time or financial resources; once a woman leaves with the children, even if the children belong to the ex-husband’s clan.<sup>242</sup> What is also interesting about the quotes from Akulu and Betty, is that they, unlike many others whom I interviewed, are aware of the nutritional value of foods other than staples.<sup>243</sup> However, as noted, if they have to choose which crops to grow then it will be staples, as having sufficient calories comes first. Quantity, once again, is what is important. It is these

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<sup>242</sup> All of the single women who I interviewed indicated that they did not receive any support from the fathers of their children. This is applicable for both those who were married traditionally and also those who co-habited.

<sup>243</sup> Cristina Akulu was one of the few women who I interviewed who had actually attended school. She was unable to complete senior four due to getting pregnant.

quotes that challenge once again the working definition of what food security is.

### **7.13.1 What influences a single woman's food security? The various stages that single women must go through.**

With this in mind, a question that I will attempt to answer is, what influences a single woman's food security? And is a single woman's food security linear?

Firstly though, when a woman leaves a marriage, be it due to abuse or for other reasons or if she has been judged as being an unfit or unsuitable wife (thus having been chased away), she will, as noted by Alaro, leave with nothing.<sup>244</sup>

Alaro: *"I wasn't given anything. I left with my hands and my children."*

After returning home to the ancestral lands of her father in 2011, and like other women that I interviewed, she left her husband because of domestic violence. Even if she has no intention of returning to him she has not been given a good sized portion of land for her and her five children, these being children who traditionally belong to the clan of her father as no bridewealth was ever paid for her, is even though she was with her husband for ten years. Because Alaro is yet to be given a plot of land that is large enough for her and her children's needs, she works as a casual labourer when there is the opportunity to do so and she also raises pigs.<sup>245</sup> It is through the selling of pigs of that she has some money to buy foodstuffs. She is in a weaker position because she buys from the market, so her expenditure of food is greater as bought food costs more. I am not sure why her father has not deemed it appropriate to give her a larger sized plot as the land that he has access to is more than enough. He is also one of the few men in the village who has the resources to hire a tractor. She may be welcomed back, but there is a degree of punishment here for leaving her relationship, even though no bridewealth was involved.

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<sup>244</sup> I have discussed what makes a good and productive wife in Chapter Five and also explained in this chapter what is a justifiable reason that a man can divorce his wife and or disregard her.

<sup>245</sup> Other women that I interviewed make homemade brew. See Appendix Ten.

Referring back to the issue of having nothing, when a woman leaves with nothing, then she will be without foodstuffs, especially if she has had to leave an abusive relationship. Moreover, she will be without vital inputs, for example a hoe and seeds. Returning women, more often than not won't even have a cooking pot. If women are lucky then they may leave with a few personal possessions, for example clothes. Thus, returning single women are initially completely dependent on the relationship that they have, not only with their father, but also with the other members of their family who are already residing on the lands of the ancestral patriarch.<sup>246</sup> As the Sub County Chief of Adunu discussed:

*"A woman's food security is related to the sympathy of the brothers."*

What I find interesting is the use of the term, sympathy. If your brothers or the generational patriarch are not sympathetic then, as a returning single woman she may be faced with numerous obstacles and problems which, as noted above, is especially the case if land is at a premium. (This would challenge that single women have firm rights to land. They have firm rights only if social conditions and resources are conducive). It is this reliance on the need for sympathy that clearly demonstrates and supports the fact that there are well defined power dynamics within the family structures within the village and that it is returning women who are vulnerable to the whims and personalities of the male members of their family, this echoing the work of Connells gender order, more specifically cathexis. Furthermore, that it is men who have ultimate control over a woman's agency when she first returns to the home. Returning women have no other choice than to be dependent on the goodwill of their families because, quite often they will have nothing, no assets, nor resources. Also, because of the limited opportunities that are available to women, village women have nowhere else to go. It is a dependence that, as discussed, owing to how land is allocated to single women, can last several years, if not longer, since unless a single women can demonstrate that she is united with her

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<sup>246</sup> It is not only in the villages where I conducted my research where women who leave abusive relationships leave with nothing, but this is something that is evident all over the world, even in societies that are not particularly patriarchal.

ancestral clan and that she will remain permanently on that land, then she will continue to be treated like a minor. This is not to say that all families are the same; in the case of Adunu this is a true reflection. However, as noted, Akech had no problems when she came home; she was allocated plots immediately.

It is during this time though, the time until women are classified as being independent, that a single woman's food security is, I believe, directly influenced by the relationships that they have with their family. This includes both men and women. The situation is more complex if a single woman returns home with children and if the family are resource poor.

When women go back home, they often return to her ancestral lands with children who traditionally belong to another clan. As previously observed, even if returning women should be welcomed back and supported, their children may not be welcome. This is something that was discussed by the Sub County Chief:

*"Recently I had this case; a woman who had returned to her home was told by her brother that her children must go back to the father because there is no land for them there. They were sent away. Also the food that they have for the year does not cater for them so they had to be sent back. Why would you support more people if you don't have to?"*

When a situation like this arises it must be extremely difficult for returning women. If presented with the choice of either keeping their children but not being able to return home to stay and to rebuild their life, or having to go back to a man who probably has treated them in a demeaning and subordinate way, because of the evident imbalances in power relations that are persistent in patriarchal societies, what do women do? This shows just how vulnerable women are who return home with children, especially if the children are from another clan and they are not welcomed by their mother's clan.

What is also interesting from the above extract is the issue of resources. Had the land of the returning woman's family been larger, then she may have been able to keep her children with her. This of course is speculation, as I am unsure as to why there was no land for them. As I have already said, there are plenty



of women who return home with their children even if bridewealth has been paid for them. These children though, upon maturity, will either be expected to marry, that is if they are girls, or if they are male to go and make claim to the land of their fathers (these being fathers that are likely to have been absent throughout their childhood).<sup>247</sup> These children though, have no choice as they will not be given access to the ancestral lands of their mother as socially this is not acceptable.

With regards to there not being enough food for the returning women's children, if we are to accept that people plan what they will need for the whole year, as proposed in Chapter Five, then this is something that is, unfortunately, to be expected. The data that is presented in Chapter Four indicates that food insecurity in the north is a reality for many and that numerous people will only have either one or two meals per day. Also if there is a surplus it may have been sold already, or it may need to be kept to one side so that a family can buy what they need when it is appropriate. There may simply not be enough for those who return and so women who have children will be turned away, not simply because the children do not belong to their mother's clan, but because there simply is not enough food to support them. It is a practical issue of resources. It could be concluded that a returning woman can destabilise the equilibrium of food distribution within a household. Of course, it also depends on which household a returning women will go to. As noted, several of the women who had left their husbands because of domestic violence returned to the home of their mothers and fathers. It is from there that they slowly began to rebuild their lives. Other than the issues proposed above, I would argue that the timing of when a woman returns is also important. If she returns when food supplies are already depleted, in the months prior to harvest, then she may be faced with problems. If a woman returns immediately after the harvest season, then there is a more realistic chance that she will be helped, especially if the harvest was good.

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<sup>247</sup> The impact of landlessness on children from a divorced background is an area that warrants further research as too, does the impact that a returning women may have on the household food security of the family members who will initially host her.

### 7.13.2 Support from our mothers

This was definitely the case for two women who I spent time with, Ajalo and Akech. When they returned home they worked at first alongside their mothers as both of their mothers are widows, and it was here that they knew they would be initially assisted, not only with food stuffs, but with somewhere to live.

When Ajalo to the ancestral lands of her father, even if she had not demonstrated to her family that she intended to remain on his ancestral lands and not return to her husband, she was allocated an area where she could grow crops for herself and her young children (though in the very beginning she helped her mother). She was allocated land because her family were aware of her needs and also because they still had enough land. With regards to somewhere to live, as two of her brothers no longer resided on the ancestral lands of their father, Ajalo and her children were allowed to live in one of their houses. She was given, not only somewhere to grow crops, but also given farming tools and her brothers helped plough her land. During the time that she was at home, Ajalo had two very successful harvests.<sup>248</sup> These harvests were made possible because she was assisted by her family upon her return. Although she did return to her husband, she still continued to help her mother with the preparation of sugar cane.

Unlike Ajalo, Akech had no intentions of going back to her husband. Firstly she couldn't even if she wanted to, as it was he who asked her to leave the family home and business. Akech was the only single woman who I interviewed who had spent most of her life living in town. She is also the only one who had been involved in the retail and hospitality sector. She and her husband own two shops and a hotel. However, as Akech's name was never included on the land registration documents, she was unable to make a claim to either the hotel or the shops. When Akech did return home, unlike all of the other single women that I interviewed, she returned home without her children. She decided to return home without her children as they are both currently in secondary school and she deemed it inappropriate to remove them from their school. Also, unlike

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<sup>248</sup> Ajalo was one of the returnee women who whilst I was in the field went back to her husband.

other single women that I interviewed, she had a very good harvest for 2013. The land that she uses consists of one plot that belongs to her mother and three plots that she borrows from a neighbour. So that she can support herself, Akech also runs a small homebrew business. During the time that I was in the villages, I would often see her at the local markets selling her homemade brew and she also sells it from her home. It is through the sales of homebrew that she hopes to buy some land for herself and also her children. I think that Akech has managed to do so well since she came home, because she is able to concentrate on herself and on her needs.

### **7.13.3 Social pressure to have children**

Once women are settled and have access to their own land, they stop being classified as being a dependent minor. This process, as noted in numerous instances, can take even years. There are several things that can and do influence not only theirs but also their children's food security, these being: their capacity (both physical and economic), their ability to access key resources, climate, the composition of the household and their social responsibilities as Acholi women to have children. It is this pressure to have children that can influence a single woman's physical ability to work effectively in her gardens. If her physical ability is affected negatively then it will ultimately influence her economic stability, which in turn will negatively influence her food security as crop production will be undermined. As discussed in Chapter Five, this is also of relevance to married women, especially those whose husbands reside away from the family home or who are part of a polygamous family. The pressures that are imposed on Acholi women in relation to continuing to have children were discussed by Akello:

*"In Acholi, even when you have come back home and you still have the capacity to produce, and you still have the energy to produce, you need to have children."*

Akello, like other returning women that I interviewed, continued to have children when she returned home. Since she returned home in 2001 she has had six children.<sup>249</sup> The father of these children is classified as being a guest husband as he has never, owing to social norms, lived with her. Nor has he supported the children that he has had with Akello. Even if she is aware that having lots of children impairs her capacity to work effectively in her gardens, (as suggested by data from the 2009 UBOS Gender Productivity Survey) and that by having a large family she will continue to be poor, she has done so due to the pressures that are exerted on Acholi women to have children for their clan, the consequences of which are discussed in the following section.<sup>250</sup>

#### **7.13.4 Capacity and access to key resources**

Other than the pressure to continue having children, the capacity of single women is also something that can affect a single woman's food security, as too is their ability to access key resources, as discussed by Ben:

*“No they don’t have their own oxen, but we normally assist them in their gardens, one of us brothers will help them. We will let them use our oxen or we will do it for them. We usually do it for them though because ploughing is not a job for women, it is a job for us men.”<sup>251</sup> They need oxen because you can only do so much with your hands; even if you are hard working, you can only do so much.”*

In relation to what Ben says about the gender divisions of labour and what women are socially permitted to do on their land this is a clear indication that there is a distinct gender order visible within the villages (Connell, 2009). Women are not socially permitted to use oxen, even if it is commonly known that the use of oxen can and does increase food production, and not having

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<sup>249</sup> She has eight living children. The compound where she lives is very basic. There were only two huts for her and her children. She was also the only person who I interviewed who did not have a chair or even a mat to sit on.

<sup>250</sup> Akello was the only woman who indicated that she felt under pressure to continue to have children. Even, if this is the case, this is not to say that other women do not feel the same pressures. Having children, after all, is a fundamental role for women in the Acholi culture.

<sup>251</sup> For reference the Labwor/Ethur tribe who border the Acholi to the East do not practice this custom.

oxen is an impediment to being able to run a successful and productive farm. I would argue that a single woman's food security is jeopardised because of distinct power relations and inequalities between femininities and masculinities within the villages (Connell, 2009). Ben's quote also shows that it is ultimately men who have power over key resources, which in this case are the oxen.

With regard to male members assisting their female relatives' returnees, I did interview a female relative of Ben and she was adamant that she has never and would never ask her brothers or male relatives, of which Ben was one, for help, as she did not want to feel indebted to them. When men have their own gardens to clear, this means that women will need to wait. This in itself could have a negative impact on a single woman's ability to plan.

I asked several people why women were not socially permitted to use oxen in their gardens and the resounding response was that women are not capable of using oxen correctly as it takes a great deal of strength and technique.<sup>252</sup> Also using an ox plough is regarded as the work and domain of men and it is a domain that should not be infringed.

Other than not having access to oxen, (whether this is due to poverty or the social dynamics that discourage women from using oxen), another issue that pertains to capacity is that of an individual's physical capacity insofar as they may simply not be able to keep pace with the amount of work that needs to be done in the gardens. This may be due to the simple fact that women also have to do everything else, including fetching water, cooking, running their household and or working as casual labourers. If this is the case, then their ability to cultivate enough crops will be negatively influenced, as discussed by Akello,

*"I have no capacity to plough my garden in time. Sometimes when it is the period for sowing the seed I am still clearing the garden. By the time people, others are weeding. I am just sowing the seed. That is why my harvest is also poor. My crop*

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<sup>252</sup> Having tried to use oxen I can say that it is difficult. However, it is a skill that I'm sure other women could easily pick up. Using a hoe is far more labour intensive.

*period for planting was late. It was delayed, and that is why I had such a poor harvest last year.”*

Akello's ability to cultivate enough crops for herself and her children is, as discussed, directly related to her physical capacity and because she continues to have children even if she has no support from their father, which, as discussed in Chapter Five, is a problem not only for single women, but also for married women who reside in de jure households. Women on their own with several small children can only do so much. The situation is made worse when they are also pregnant.

The relevance of the composition of the household is addressed in the following excerpt from an interview that I conducted with Alobo.<sup>253</sup>

Lisa: *“Why can't you cultivate a large variety of crops if you are a female headed household?”*

Alobo: *“We have nothing to help us cultivate those varieties; I am alone and only have my hands.”*

Lisa: *“So, if it is a male headed household do you think that they can cultivate more because usually they have a wife?”*

Alobo: *“Yes, if there are two people, which there usually always are. When a household is male headed then yes they can work together on the land, that way they have a greater capacity.”*

It would appear from this extract that, like others, Alobo's problem is that she is on her own and that she only has her hands to dig. I find it interesting that she thinks that a farm will do better if there are two people, in this case a husband and wife. As I have argued in Chapter Two there is evidence that

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<sup>253</sup> Aलोbo has lived on the lands of her father since 2008 with her two sons. As no bridewealth was ever paid for her by her ex partner's family her children will continue to reside with her. Aलोbo was also only given her own gardens in 2013. Between 2008 and 2013 she helped her mother in her gardens.

supports the argument that households that are headed by women will actually do better than those that have two adults.

The relevance of capacity and access to resources was also addressed by Anna. Anna, unlike all of the other women that I interviewed, is the head of her family and has complete control over the land that she resides upon. This is the case as her father never had any male children and his brothers, like him, are also deceased.

*Anna: "Maybe for my case it is because I plant late and I also use hand hoe, you cannot compare a hand hoe with oxen. Using oxen is different.... Look at me I have a lot of land; no one will disturb me because there is only me and my sister. But I am still poor."*

The perceptions of Anna support, the idea that land alone will not make one food secure and that it is a complex process. This echoes the work of Quisumbing and Pandolfelli (2009).

#### **7.13.5 Climate**

Other than having limited capacity, a factor that influences a single woman's ability to be food secure is, as with married women, widows and men, climate. This is something that was discussed during an interview that I conducted with Alice.

*Lisa: "How has food production and food security changed since you have been home?"*

*Alice: "Now that I am now home, there is a change in the weather. Normally the rains come in February; nowadays it is late and the harvest is interrupted. You can plan but it won't help, that is now why our food production has changed. The trend in the rainfall for us is a problem, yields have gone down. Before we were used to the one season and one season was enough for us; now things have changed so much, that to the extent that people are now planting in two seasons. People have learnt that the first season, so from March to July, they*

*now know that the output will be very low. The second season, so from August, gives a bigger harvest, a bigger harvest of the same crop.”*

Lisa: *“Do you think that this will increase food production then”?*

Alice: *“Yes, because if you rely on one season like we used to do and fail to get high output, that means that your crop will be finished before the next season. You need to wait and you need to plan.”*

On a final note, in relation to what influences food security, I asked Betty how important she thought secure access to land was.

Lisa: *“Do you think that having secure access to land will increase food production”?*

Betty: *“No, food production is related to capacity; that is my biggest challenge. Having secure access, where you know you cannot be moved just helps you sleep better at night.”*

From what is presented above, other than being able to access land, it is clear that the biggest problem that single women have with regards to what influences their food security is their individual capacity to be able to work the land and also their inability as women to own and or use key resources, of which as noted, an oxen plough is one. As this is the case, several of the women that I interviewed had devised coping mechanisms.

#### **7.13.6 Coping mechanisms**

If single women are not in a position to produce and cultivate enough food for themselves and their children, or if they are short of staples, which, as indicated above, is common, then they will need to, and do, devise ways in which they can earn money so that they can buy food for themselves and their families from the local markets. <sup>254</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Nearly all of the women that I talked to went to the markets; the frequency of these visits though varied. For those who sell homemade brew they would go every week.



Lisa: *“What will you do between June and the next harvest”?*

Alobo: *“I will have to go and work in someone else’s garden, so that I can get some little money.”*

Lisa: *“Will that not be a time when you should be working in your gardens?”*

Alobo: *“Yes, but we need to eat. If I do not work, I will not eat. If I do not eat then I will not have enough energy to work in my garden. There is no other way. Because I am on my own, I have to do what I must so that me and my children eat and survive.”*

Other than going to work in the gardens of others, women will also make home brew, and cut down trees and make them into charcoal. It is this charcoal that they will sell, either at local markets or along the roadside. Single women will also rear pigs and chickens. The felling of trees and the making of homebrew and rearing small livestock are not activities that need influence how a woman works her garden. Working for others though, at peak times of the farming season, could negatively influence food production in their own gardens. However, as Alobo states, when you are a single woman on your own with children then you as a single woman have to do whatever it takes so that you survive.<sup>255</sup>

## **7.14 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed how gender relations influence a single woman’s access to and maintained access to land and demonstrated how gender relations influence a single woman’s food security.

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<sup>255</sup> As discussed previously, paying child maintenance is a foreign concept, especially in the villages where the cash economy is limited. Fathers also do not provide their children with food stuffs nor pay for their education once they are no longer living with them.

Firstly, it discussed the differences between a woman's ability to divorce a husband and a man's ability to divorce a wife. It clearly demonstrated that, as with marriage, women are disadvantaged, insofar as divorce goes in favour of men and that for a wife to leave her husband there must be a serious threat to her life. I say this as all of the women whom I interviewed had left their husbands due to domestic violence. What also became clear is that even if no bridewealth had been paid, women will still remain in abusive relationships, though the justification for this is unclear. That said, I argue that it may be due to the stigma that they may experience and also if they think that they may not be welcomed back home. These observations, though are hypothetical and unfounded.

Women who had left their husbands for reasons other than domestic abuse are actively encouraged to go back, especially if they had been married in the traditional sense. Also, those women who had been 'chased' away were rejected, because they had failed to give birth to male children, thus 'denying' their husband's clan heirs.

From the evidence presented, it is clear that even if women are technically aware that they are socially able to make a claim to their ancestral lands, (as too are men), when a relationship breaks down, that these 'rights' may not always be respected, and that if they are respected, they will need to be prepared to make certain concessions and also negotiate with the patriarch. In one instance, a woman, Mary was expected to take on the identity of a man.

If there are land constraints, (which in the context of the villages are few), then it is returning women who will be at a disadvantage, as land will already have been allocated to the males of the family, or a male's needs will be seen as being greater than a woman's. This is even if she has children, and especially if the children are of another clan. Even if land is not at a premium, in some cases until women can demonstrate that their allegiances are to their ancestral clan, and that they are prepared to make certain concessions that are directly related to their reproductive ability then they will not be given access to their own plots. They may have a place to construct a house, but

no individual gardens. Women who find themselves with limited access to land are forced to rent from others or partake in casual employment. That said, there were some women whom I interviewed who are permitted to use as much land as they want. However, even if this is the case, due to their limited physical and economic capacity some of these women are unable to utilise the land as they simply cannot manage. Apart from being resource poor, women also have to care for their children.

In relation to food security, the data has shown that for a single woman to be food secure some women must initially be prepared to accept a change in their social status. Women are expected to assume the position of being a minor, as when a woman first returns home her food security is completely contingent upon the relationships that she has, not only with the female members of her family, but also the males. The reason why single women will have to rely on their families for their food needs is that when there is a breakdown in a marriage and or relationship, women on most occasions (especially if they have experienced domestic abuse) will often leave with nothing. This demonstrates the power that not only the conjugal patriarch has over their food security whilst married, but also that the generational patriarch wields when they return home. For a single woman to become food secure is a gradual and often difficult process owing to the following: their responsibility to look after young children, an inability to access and also use resources, (of which an ox is one) pressures to earn a cash income and a conducive climate.

What is clear from this chapter is that, single women actually do have a certain degree of freedom as they are no longer under the control of their conjugal patriarch. However, they are never truly independent, nor free from a patriarch, as the ultimate authority lies with men who control the land. Thus, their rights are contingent and dependent both upon others decisions and particular family relationships. It is these decisions and relationships that can and do influence a single woman's food security.

Having presented the three data chapters, I will now conclude this thesis with an overview of key findings and their relevance to international development thinking.

## **Chapter Eight-Conclusion**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter brings the thesis to a close. It is divided into five sections. Firstly, I present a summary of the empirical data and the analytical discussions that have been put forth. In doing so I refer back to the primary research questions, as discussed in Chapter One. In answering the questions I focus my attention on the various categories of women who have been discussed throughout the thesis. It is through the discussion of the findings that the implications of the research emerge. Secondly, I discuss what I would have done differently if I were able to conduct this research again, and why. Thirdly I propose how this thesis contributes knowledge to the interdisciplinary field of international development studies and where the research could be used. The fourth section is concerned with areas that have emerged that warrant further research, research that I believe should be guided by feminism and a gender awareness lens. I then end the thesis by giving my final comments.

### **8.2 Summary of findings**

This thesis was informed predominately by Western feminism, with a gender awareness lens at its foundations, and was guided by the works of Raewyn Connell, Sylvia Walby, Naila Kabeer and Deniz Kandiyoti, amongst others. It has explored how gender relations in the post-conflict villages of Adunu and Kom in northern Uganda influence a woman's access to and maintained access to land and also a woman's food security. It has clearly demonstrated that a woman's access to land is not only related to gender and customary law, but also (and most importantly) a woman's marital and parental status. Even if this is the case, a woman's continued access to land is a complex process of negotiations and bargaining. Forgoing power over one's sexuality and reproductive ability are usually involved in such negotiations as, too, are conforming to socially constructed norms of behaviour, these being norms that are grounded in ideologies of patriarchy (Walby, 1990). It is these gender relations that also have an impact on a woman's food security.

Table Ten demonstrates the relevance of marital status on land allocation in the villages studied, and illustrates what women are socially expected to do if they wish to maintain access to their lands.

Category of women	Married	Widow	Single
<b>Who acquire land from</b>	Husband	Husband	Father
<b>What they are socially expected to do if wish to remain on the land that they have been allocated</b>	Conform to gender roles as wife and mother. Work hard and be effective. Do not challenge the masculinities of husband. Produce children.	In some instances accept a Samuel rate husband. Accept that the clan have power over sexual freedom. Clan have power over children. Do not marry outside of the clan.	Accept a lower status. Demonstrate commitment to the clan and prove will not leave. Accept a masculine role, and assume male behaviours but, don't challenge masculinities of male family members.
<b>Factors that can negatively influence continued access</b>	If they go against social expectations and do not conform to socially constructed gender roles. If husband is polygamous. Having only daughters.	If have no children. If children are female. If challenge the masculinities of male members of husbands family. Pressures on the land. If traditional law is not respected. If husband died from a HIV related death.	Pressures on the land. Not conforming to socially accepted norms.
<b>Factors that can positively influence continued access</b>	Having sons. Compliance of social role within the family.	Having sons, especially adult sons. Accepting a Samuel rate husband. Age of the widow. How the husband died.	Conform to social expectations.

Table Ten. How women access land and how they retain it.

Having given an overview of the key findings of this research I will now answer the sub questions as presented in Chapters One and Three.

### **1) How are gender relations manifested and supported?**

Gender relations are not only manifested by the patriarchal ideologies of the clans and the family, but also, as this thesis has shown, state policy and legislation (Walby, 1990; Connell, 2009). Gender relations within the villages are intrinsically patriarchal and there are clearly defined hierarchal structures that influence not only women, but also men (Connell, 1987; 2001; 2005; 2009). It is these patriarchal ideologies of power that are supported by both men and women (Lerner, 1986; Sen, 1990). Much of this support, especially in relation to women who are married, is possible because of the proprietary element of bridewealth (Therborn, 2004). That said, there is no denying that bridewealth is perceived by both men and women as being important, thus supporting the views of Arnfred (2011) though, as I have argued, it is a tradition that ultimately supports the subordination of women, even if it does afford women with a level of some security. The only real benefit to marriage, it would appear, is that it gives women an elevated status; other than that, the benefits are minimal as any children born in these unions belong to the clan of the male and also, when bridewealth is paid, women become the property of their husband's clan. Not only this, but as I have made reference to, the payment of bridewealth does not always afford women security. This is especially relevant to widows and their ability to continue to access the lands of their late husbands.

Women, as observed, are expected to conform to their socially constructed gender roles as mothers and wives and also to respect the institutions of the family and the clan. There are clearly defined roles based on femininities and masculinities with women being seen and socially accepted as being the subordinate sex. This is even if it is recognised that a family cannot sustain itself unless there is a strong, productive and hard working woman. Women within the institution of the family are more than aware that, regardless of their

marital status, they are ultimately answerable to either the conjugal patriarch or the generational patriarch. This is a reality owing to how women access land and also due to the limited options that women have available to them in the villages. As I have said, women take it as a given that they will marry and that they will be farmers. Even if they are not in relationships they will still be farmers. People in the villages are proud of their traditions and, as I have presented in this thesis, any tradition that continues to support the subordination of women is unlikely to be challenged. For instance, wife inheritance may be seen as being obsolete, or decreasing. However, this practice has changed, not because it is seen as supporting patriarchy and undermining a women's agency, but because of the presence of HIV/AIDS. If Acholi society were not patriarchal, then this would not be the case.

Finally, what became apparent whilst doing this research is that gender relations are also supported by women through a process of negotiations and bargaining. It is these strategies that facilitate women with holding onto what they know is rightly theirs. It is also these strategies that illustrate that even within a male dominated society, women do have a certain degree of agency, though it comes at a cost.

## **2a) How does one access land in the villages of Adunu and Kom and what influences this access?**

It is clear from how women make claims to land that it is directly related to their marital status, as observed in Table Ten. The reason why the majority of women only access land through a patriarch is that, firstly, nearly all of the land in the villages are held in customary tenure, thus controlled and held in trusteeship by the clan elder (Bikaako & Senkumba ,2003). Secondly, if there is land available that is classified as being freehold, women are often not in a position to buy land owing to their limited financial resource and also due to the social expectations that women will be provided with land by a patriarch and that independent land ownership is not actively encouraged (Asiimwe, 2001). An exception is when the woman in question is single. It is also a woman's marital status that influences what women get access to. As land in the villages is undifferentiated by gender, married women access all of the



land of their husbands, and they do have a certain level of power over this land, thus implying that even if Acholi society is ultimately male dominated that women are not completely subordinate. Widows, as proposed by state legislation, are entitled to 15% of the lands of their husband, though as discussed in Chapter Six, none of the women that I interviewed were aware of this legislation and socially widows are entitled to control all of the land of their late husbands. Thus the 15% that is proposed by the government is of little or no relevance to women in the villages. The fact that widows are socially permitted to have all of the land of their late husband's demonstrates that there are variations in the type of CLTS that are evident in SSA. As discussed, widows under the house property complex, as proposed by Kevane (2004), will lose their lands automatically upon the death of their husbands as they will be distributed to the male members of the husband's clan. Even if widows are socially expected to take control of their husbands lands, as discussed in Chapter Six and also illustrated in Table Ten, it is only possible for widows to reside on their husband's lands if they are prepared to make concessions. Either that, or be prepared to fight for what they know is socially theirs. Single women access land from their father, though how much they receive as discussed in Chapter Seven is related to numerous factors of which the number of children that she has and also if the children are of her kin, or the kin of their father is one.

## **2b) What do women have to do so that they can continue to access traditional customary lands?**

As discussed, all women are socially permitted and expected to access land either through the conjugal patriarch or the ancestral patriarch. However, it is far from being this simple, as I have illustrated in Table Ten.

In relation to married women, as discussed, they automatically gain access and or inherit land once they move onto the ancestral lands of their husbands family. However, if they wish to remain on these lands then they must be prepared to conform to their gender roles as mothers and submissive and obedient wives and not challenge the gender hierarchy. They must be in a

position to always demonstrate that they are hardworking and that they are a valuable component to the family. Even if this is the case, as I have illustrated, women are not without agency and or power. It is through the continuous process of bargaining that they assert this power and subsequent agency. In some respects it is through the socially constructed gender roles that they are able to do this.

Single women who return to the lands of their fathers must be prepared to conform to social norms and allow the male members of their family to control their sexual freedom. It is imperative that they prove their allegiance to their ancestral clan and demonstrate that they are serious in this commitment and that they have no intentions of leaving their ancestral lands and also that they will not bring a man onto their ancestral lands. If needs be, they are expected to sacrifice their children; however as this research has indicated, all of the women who had left their husband's because of domestic violence, or who had been classified by their husbands as not fulfilling their socially constructed gender roles had all taken their children with them when their relationships had ended. This supports Tripp (2003) who proposes that traditional norms are eroding. It is this that challenges the theory that women will have to leave their children when a relationship ends and also questions why women may stay in relationships that are unequal. Fear of losing their children appears in many cases to be unfounded.

Widows, as discussed, are theoretically permitted to continue to remain on the lands of their husband because bridewealth will have been paid for them and they are socially seen as belonging to their late husband's clan, though, as observed, they will never be fully accepted into their adoptive clan. However, in reality if widows wish to remain on the lands of their late husbands, they must be prepared to make certain concessions. Several of these concessions are related to a woman's sexual freedom, so involve wife inheritance and 'cleansing'. If widows choose not to be inherited then they must be able to demonstrate to their late husband's clan that they have no intentions of taking a man from another clan and also that they will never be classified or seen as being more successful than the male members of their late husband's family.

It is imperative that they remember their place on the gender hierarchy (Connell, 2009).

### **3a) What is food security and how does someone become food secure?**

It is clear from the evidence that has been presented throughout this thesis that for one to be food secure in the villages where I conducted my research, both men and women must be in a position to successfully grow not only enough crops for a household's needs, but excess, as it is the excess that enables people to buy the produce that they are unable to cultivate. That said, the crops that are of most benefit are those that are classified as being staple crops, which are crops that are easily storable once harvested and ones that have longevity. It is also the production of staple crops that is seen as having a higher economic value, more so than perishable food stuffs. The evidence presented here resoundingly supports that food security is about quantity and not quality, thus supporting, as I have argued, that the working definition of what it means to be food secure is a redundant theory and one that has minimal validity, especially in the context of the villages where I conducted my research. This justifies why this is of importance.

### **3b) What influences individual and household food security?**

An individual's food security in the villages is related to numerous factors, of which the ability to access and control land is one. However, having access and maintained access to land alone will not make a person food secure, this echoing the work of Quisumbing and Pandolfelli (2009). As noted in Chapter Five, there are numerous families who have access to large areas of land, but they are still prone to and are very vulnerable to food insecurity. What became apparent was that, for one to be food secure the climate has to be conducive to the farming season and also it is an issue of resources. Households that have access to oxen are in a stronger position than those who only have a hoe, as yields from fields that have been ploughed with oxen will be higher. It is this that echoes the work of Holden et al. (2001). Planning effectively is important, which is specifically of relevance if women are married in

polygamous unions and also if they are socially classified as being in de facto marriages.

With regards to single women who have returned home, a single woman's food security is a very complex matter and is subject to change over time. At first when women return home they are completely dependent on the relationships that they have, not only with the male members of their family, but also the female members, especially their mothers. It is the extended family members who must not only meet a single woman's immediate food needs when they return home, but also support them in rebuilding their lives and, when it is deemed appropriate, afford them with land of their own. Single women are in a continuous process of bargaining, and it is their ability to bargain and to be able to make concessions and compromises that influences how well they do once they return home. As I have discussed in Chapter Seven, a great deal of what single women have to do is concentrated on compromises that they are willing to make in relation to their reproductive ability. They must also be willing to accept a lower status within society. Even if in some instances, women are not ruled completely by rigid patriarchal social norms, male dominance is still very strong, as it is men who have ultimate power over their food security needs and also those of their children. That, said, women do have some agency, and it is how they are able to negotiate that demonstrates this.

Even if single women are allocated land, unless they have access to resources then they, like widows and married women, will experience problems. They are also disadvantaged due to the social divisions of labour insofar as they are not permitted among the Acholi to plough their gardens with oxen. It is these gender divisions of socially accepted forms of labour that can and do have a negative effect on a woman's food security. A single woman's food security is also influenced by the number of children that they have and also by their ages. As men do not support their children once a marriage ends and neither do men who are classified as being guest husbands, (Moser, 1993) then it is a woman's sole responsibility to provide for their children.

With regards to widows, from what has been presented here, even if bridewealth has been paid and they belong to the clan of their late husband, their food security is not guaranteed as men may exert their power and authority (albeit incorrectly) over the lands of widows. This, as noted, can be due to encroaching on a widow's land or making their lives so difficult that they have no real option other than to leave. This is more likely to happen if the widow is young. Widows are in a similar position to single women insofar as they are restricted in how they can cultivate their lands. They are also open to abuse if they chose not to be inherited.

### **3) Are women more prone to food insecurity than men?**

All women, regardless of their marital status, are susceptible to food insecurity, as the villages as a whole are susceptible. When households have both a husband and wife who permanently reside together, I found no evidence that married women would be less food secure than men; if anything, owing to the gender divisions of labour, women should be more food secure as it is they who have control over, firstly crops, and secondly, how the crops are utilised. It is here where women demonstrate that they have power within the home, even if patriarchal ideologies prevail and that they are not without agency (Sen, 1990; Arnfred, 2011).

#### **8.2.1 Conclusion to findings**

Emphasis throughout this thesis has been given to CLT, owing to its prevalence in the Acholi region. In relation to CLT, contrary to the popular belief that CLT discriminates against women (see, Manji, 2006; Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2006) and that as a LTS it exacerbates food insecurity and poverty and is an obstacle to development in SAA (Ynsgtrom, 2009; Razavi, 2007; Peters, 2009; Deininger & Binswanger, 1999). In the context of the villages where I conducted my research, I am inclined to agree with Veit (2011) who proposes that CLT is not universally discriminatory, as all categories of women

are to be afforded access and maintained access to land. Ultimately women belong either to the clan of their fathers or to the clan of their husbands. Women experience difficulties in land access and retention if they do not conform to social expectations that pertain to behaviour. It is these gender roles that exist beyond land tenure. It is how women perform being women, in particular ways and at what stage of their life cycle, that is of importance.

Thus is it is the patriarchal ideologies and social norms that are of concern, especially those that encourage a women to be subordinate and to conform to certain codes of behaviour. It is the payment of bridewealth that in numerous instances is at the heart of this, though it can also afford women security. It is clear that even within a predominantly patriarchal society there are many contradictions, which is to be expected as these are people's lived experiences. In the international development policy arena this is something that is difficult to change as patriarchal ideologies are deeply imbedded social norms that are intrinsic to culture and identity.

It is also clear that, even if there are state legislations in place to support women, that even these favour certain categories of women. The policies of the state on so many levels are merely moralistic ideas and full of contradictions.

### **8.3 Limitation to the research and what I could have done differently**

If it were possible for me to do this research again there are several things that I would do differently. Firstly I would have elected to stay in the village of Kom with members of my husband's extended family, as I believe this would have given me a more nuanced understanding of the lives of women within the community. In being in the village I would also have been able to partake in more day-to-day activities. I would also have stayed there longer and taken my eldest daughter with me.

With regard to the methods that were employed, even if the interviews that I conducted provided rich narrative data, I would have liked to have conducted several life history interviews, especially with older members of the community,

as it would have been interesting to see if gender relations have evolved during their lifetimes and if so, how, and also to find out what impact the war had on these relations. This was something that was alluded to during some interviews, however, only briefly. I did try to talk about how people had been influenced by food insecurity since Museveni took power. However, the answers were few and people could not say with clarity how their food security needs had been affected; this was mainly due to the long length of the war. Even if people in the villages have been home at least for the past eight years, people are still clearly recovering from what they will have experienced, I say this with conviction as I am aware of how the war affected the members of my husband's family and many of his clan's people.

Ideally, I would have liked to have been able to conduct similar research in other areas of the Acholi region, more specifically areas where there are known to be land conflicts and land scarcity as I believe the data generated would be different, especially with regards to how single women retain land to which they know they are socially entitled to. Also, as I have no affiliation to any other villages in the Acholi region, as a researcher it would be interesting to see how I would be received.

With regards to my research assistant, even if I enjoyed working with Mike, and I appreciate that there are numerous advantages of conducting fieldwork in an area that is intrinsically patriarchal, with the assistance of a man, I would have preferred to have been able to work with a female research assistant whilst conducting interviews with women. I am inclined to believe that some women may have been more forthcoming, especially when discussing the gender division of power within families that are headed by men if in the presence of women only.

Lastly, instead of analysing gender and patriarchy from a predominantly white Western feminist perspective, I could have used works from feminists from within SSA. Even if feminists from SSA may agree that women are subordinate to men, as is the norm with Western Feminists, by using the works of those such as Oyěwùmí and Sylvia Tamale this may have given a different perspective to this research.

#### **8.4 Implications of the research; how this research can be related to international development thinking.**

This thesis offers a contribution to the expanding body of empirical work that is explicitly concerned with women's perceptions of what food security is in the context of agrarian communities within SSA and to the wider food security debate. It also discusses how women in the Acholi region and also other areas of SSA access and retain land, and what strategies they are socially expected to employ if they wish to retain access. This thesis also contributes to literature that pertains to gender studies, Uganda and land tenure and debates about the validity of bridewealth.

As so much work within international development thinking is concerned with policy and poverty alleviation, the implications of this research on international development policy are that there should to be a more grounded understanding of how gender relations are manifested and how and why they are sustained in the way that they are. This means working collectively with elders and clan leaders as well as women to address the issues of inequality. However, even if this is done, it is imperative that cultural relativism be taken into consideration. Encouraging men to appreciate that women are not merely in transit would be a good place to start, as too would be addressing the socially constructed divisions of labour and the expectations that bridewealth needs to be paid, as well as what the payment of bridewealth in reality actually means. Dialogue of this nature however, must come from within the Acholi community and not from outsiders and non-Acholi.

Projects that are run by NGOs which are concerned with gender equality could focus their attentions on addressing gender imbalances of power and access to key assets, of which, as observed, oxen is just one. As shown in the data chapters, one of the biggest obstacles that women face, is being able to farm effectively when they have small children and minimal assistance. Ideally this is something that could be addressed by state policy, for example free childcare for women who work, of which being a non-commercial farmer is classified as work.



## **8.5 Suggestions for further research**

Based on some of the themes that emerged in this thesis, the following are areas that I believe warrant further exploration. They especially relate to international development thinking and specifically to women and gender studies.

### **∂ What impact does a woman who returns home to their ancestral lands have on the food security of her family?**

As discussed in Chapter Seven of this thesis, many women who return home are initially dependent on the goodwill of their family members, not only for somewhere to live, but also for their primary needs, of which food is one. Owing to this an area that merits empirical research is the impact that their return has on a household's food security.

### **∂ How prevalent is domestic violence in the context of, not only the villages, but also the Acholi region as a whole and what is the impact of this violence?**

As discussed there have been several studies conducted that pertain to the prevalence of domestic violence in the Acholi region. However, what is missing from these studies is what the social implications of such acts of violence are?

### **∂ Do women feel more empowered if they are classified as being a female headed household, or is marriage the ultimate form of empowerment?**

As discussed, marriage is something that women aspire to as it brings them an elevated status and in some respects a degree of power and ownership over the primary resource, land. However, as there were numerous women who I interviewed who were perfectly fine with being single as they, like married women, also have land, I would like to know if marriage is actually a necessity.

### **∂ What would happen if bridewealth was made illegal; where would this leave women?**

There has been a great deal of reference given over to the issue of bridewealth in the context of the villages and what this socially affords women, be this the negative implications or the positive ones. Bridewealth is seen as being intrinsic to the Acholi way of life. However, as traditional practices and culture are far from being static entities, it would be interesting to see how life could or may be affected if the payment of bridewealth were made illegal.

### **8.6 Final Comments**

If women in the villages of Adunu and Kom wish to maintain access to 'their' lands, then they must be prepared to negotiate, and bargain with the male members of their families and most importantly be prepared to hold on to what they know is socially and rightfully theirs. If they are able to do this and internal and external factors are conducive, then their food security will also be assured.

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## **Appendix One**

### **Twenty Years of War**

The war in the North can be characterised by several phases (Dolan, 2011) all of which had varying durations and all of which were marked by a similar recurring pattern. Firstly there would be a period of acute activity, of violence and carnage, which would then be followed by a gradual decline.

#### **Phase One, who needs Peace? 1986-1988.**

With Museveni safely in power in Kampala, thousands of former soldiers loyal to the UNLA retreated back towards their homelands of the Acholi region. Their retreat, as noted by Finnström (2008), was far from peaceful as, as they proceeded towards the Acholi region they looted and pillaged homes. Museveni's NRA were, however, in pursuit of the ex UNLA soldiers as they expected a rebellion to begin in the North. The thoughts of a rebellion by ex UNLA soldiers became unfounded as when the NRA entered into the Acholi region they met no resistance as the UNLA soldiers had either hidden or abandoned their arms (Atkinson, 2010). That said, there were remnants of the defeated UNLA army who did regroup and who wanted to overthrow Museveni. As it was deemed unsafe to regroup in Uganda, they had crossed the border into what is now known as South Sudan. It was not until August 1986 that the newly founded rebel group the Ugandan People's Democratic Army, (UPDA) crossed back into Uganda. Meanwhile the soldiers of the NRA, even if they had met no resistance when they arrived into the Acholi sub-region, committed what can only be called gross atrocities and human rights violations. Acholi women were raped, both men and women were beaten and tortured, houses were looted and burnt down and cattle were stolen (Dolan, 2010). Cattle were not only stolen by NRA soldiers but they were also rustled by the neighbouring Karimojong. Cattle-rustling is something that continued throughout the war. Between 1986 and 1998 the number of cattle, for example in Kitgum, went from 156,667 to 3239 (Westbrook, 2000). In Gulu district the situation was similar, as noted by Weeks (2002). In 1983 it was believed that there were 123,375 head of cattle, but by 2001 the figure was close to 3000 (ibid). The effects were a loss of economic capacity as cattle were used as

capital, but also a destabilisation in social fabric as men had traditionally reared cattle. With no cattle to rear, this meant that their contribution to household income decreased; it could be concluded that their role as patriarch was challenged. Owing to the actions of the NRA soldiers, even if the majority of the Acholi were not interested in war, when the UPDA did return they were largely supported and welcomed back. The numbers of UPDA soldiers were thought to lie between 3000-4000 people. However, their presence in the region was short lived and the initial popularity that they experienced decreased, thus they entered into peace talks with Museveni's government and in June 1988 a peace deal was agreed.

### **More rebels**

Other than the UPDA, another rebel group who were also active during this time was the Holy Spirit Mobile Force, (HSMF) a fanatical Christian group with eccentric spiritual beliefs.<sup>256</sup> The group was led by Alice Lakwena, and they had a lot of support from the local community because they did not commit crimes against them (Atkinson, 2010). They were however, badly prepared, and had inferior weapons to the UPDA. Even if this was the case, as a group they managed to inflict numerous casualties on the UPDA and even managed to get close to Kampala. It is the march to Kampala that broke them as a group. Alice fled to Kenya, whilst several splinter groups emerged from the HSMF, one of these being Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army, (LRA). Kony's justification for continuing a war in the Acholi region was so that he could rid Uganda of Museveni's government and have a government led by him that would be based on the Ten Commandments (Atkinson, 2010).

The decision to continue fighting after years of war was unpopular with the people of the Acholi lands, and Kony was an unpopular figure who commanded minimal support. Owing to this, with no resources at his immediate disposal, he and his few remaining loyal soldiers began a reign of terror. They looted homes and kidnapped. It is estimated that during the twenty years that they terrorised the region up to 20,000 children, both male and

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<sup>256</sup> For reference Lakwena, even if she persuaded her fighters that if they covered their bodies with shea nut oil they could not be shot, was actually supported by numerous professionals and politicians who had their allegiance to Obote. (Mulumba, 2002).

female were abducted.<sup>257</sup> The boys were trained to be soldiers and the girls were raped, and forced to be wives to the soldiers<sup>258</sup>. Numerous civilians were also mutilated (Allen & Vlassenroot, 2010). Others were murdered. It is a war, though, that, as suggested by Museveni in a statement published in the New Vision newspaper in August 1987, was inevitable.

“It is inevitable and desirable that a clash of this type between the forces of patriotism and modernisation, on the one hand, and the remnants of colonialism and forces of backwardness, takes place in order to ensure a stable Uganda.” (New Vision in Atkinson, 2010:288.)

#### **More War please. 1988-94**

The attacks that the Acholi had experienced at the hands of the LRA since they first arrived in the region instead of decreasing, continued in the same vein. That said, people though terrorised, were generally able to continue with their lives as normal, especially if they did not reside near major trading centres. Fighting between the NRA and the LRA, however, was kept to a minimum between the end of 1988 and the beginning of 1991. In April 1991, the Government, wanting to rid the area of all of Kony's fighters, began a campaign called Operation North (Dolan, 2011). Between April 1991 and July 1991, the Acholi region was closed off from the rest of Uganda and the outside world. People were detained and arrested, beaten and tortured for information concerning the rebels. It was also during this time when the people of the Acholi lands were told to stand up to the rebels and to drive them out of their region. This was something that was not taken well by Kony, thus he stepped up his terror on the civilian population. Between mid 1992 and early 1993 there was a notable lull in the violence. Owing to this peace talks were initiated

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<sup>257</sup> Those taken for at least a day are thought to number between 60,000 to 80,000. (Berber & Blattman, 2010; Annan, et al, 2006). My husband is one such person.

<sup>258</sup>My brother in law and my niece are two such people; my husband's youngest brother was also kidnapped, however he has never returned home.

between the government and the LRA and presided over by Betty Bigombe<sup>259</sup>. In January 1994, Bigombe, accompanied by a group of Acholi elders and religious leaders, met with Kony. He was prepared to lay down his arms and stop fighting the government. However, he informed Bigombe that he would need six months. When Museveni heard this, instead of coming to a compromise he gave Kony one week (Atkinson, 2010). Inevitably the proposed peace process failed.

### **The age of the Constitution and Uganda's first elections since Museveni seized power. 1994-1999**

During the 1994-1999 period it is widely believed that the rebel's base had relocated to across the border into what is now known as South Sudan (Dolan, 2003). Even if this was the case, attacks against civilians continued and massacres became a common occurrence. Regardless of what Kony's political agenda may have been, what little support he had soon evaporated owing to the actions of his rebels. It was the heightening of activity by the LRA that gave Museveni the perfect justification for forcefully relocating people into 'protective villages or, as they became known, Internally Displaced People's (IDP) camps. By the end of 1996, 200,000 people from Gulu district were forced into camps, many of whom would spend at least the next ten years living in them (ibid). These villages were supposed to protect the civilian population from abductions and murder; however they were poorly guarded and the conditions within them were inhumane. As Finnström (2005) argues, the Acholi people were forcefully resettled into IDP camps by the government as a military strategy and not for the sole purpose of protecting those who lived in the area.<sup>260</sup> In numerous instances people were given only 48 hours' notice before they were moved into camps. The timing of their displacement was entirely out of their control, (Adelman, et al., 2013). If they were found out in the open, regardless if they were men, women or children, they would be indiscriminately gunned down, be this by soldiers on the ground or by

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<sup>259</sup> Betty Bigombe was the NRM minister for Pacification of the North.

<sup>260</sup> In total there were some 218 IDP camps, which housed between 10,000 and 60,000 people.



helicopter gunships. UDPA violence and repression was rampant within the villages, and people were forced to forgo their dignity. They were humiliated and were forced to depend on a government who had nothing but contempt for them. After years of fighting, early 1999 saw a notable lull in the activities of both the LRA and the UDPA. As Atkinson (2010) observes, this was probably to do with the fact that the Ugandan army were busy in the Congo and many of the troops who were in the North were diverted to the Congo. Also, once again informal peace talks began. As had previously happened though, the peace talks failed. There were several problems with the peace talks; primarily the talks were held between the Ugandan and Sudanese governments with the external actor, the American Carter Centre presiding over the talks. Even if the war in the Acholi lands was being waged by the LRA and also by the UDPA and not the Sudanese, even if it is likely that Kony did receive backing from the Sudanese, the LRA were never a party to these talks. Museveni also never really displayed any real desire to participate fully, the effect being that this infuriated Kony (Neu, 2002). The only peace deal brokered was between the Ugandans and the Sudanese.<sup>261</sup>

### **Late 1999-2002**

The welcome lull in the violence was once again short lived. Within a few weeks of the peace agreement being signed between the Ugandan and Sudanese governments the LRA came back into Uganda. However, this time the violence, as perpetrated by the LRA, was short lived as the LRA began to have contact finally with the Carter Centre. Not only this, but the LRA's relations with the Sudanese government also began to sour and an amnesty was initiated. The turning point in this phase was when the LRA went from being recognised solely as a rebel group to being named as a terrorist group not only by the Ugandans, but also by the Americans (Dolan, 2010). It was also during this time that the Sudanese agreed to allow the Ugandan government into their country so that they could try and rescue some of the children who had been abducted by the LRA. Thus began operation Iron Fist.

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<sup>261</sup> See <http://www.cartercenter.org/countries/uganda-peace-conflict.html> for an over of the peace talks between Sudan and Uganda.

### **Operation Iron fist and the displacement and near destruction of the Acholi, 2002-2008. Camp life.**

Operation Iron fist was intended to finally end the long running war with the LRA. No fewer than 10,000 government troops were involved (Dolan, 2011). It is also during this time however, that there was an intensification in violence from the LRA. It was an intensity that the region had never truly seen before. Human Rights Watch, (HRW, 2003b) estimated that between June 2002 and March 2003 up to 5000 people were abducted. It was also during this time, when nearly all Acholi were to become internally displaced, the consequences of which were devastating for the Acholi people.

At the height of this phase, there was a sharp increase in the number of people residing in IDP camps from 650,000 in July 2002 to 1.4 million by December 2003 (Shaw & Mbabazi, 2008). In 2005, as noted by Finnström (2008) the number of displaced people at the height of displacement in 2004 reached nearly two million or 90 % of the population. This being a population that consisted of predominantly poor farmers who resided in the rural areas of the region. As Kindi (2010) notes, for example in Pader, 78% of the population of the district, or 229, 115 were internally displaced as of the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2003. This is a sharp increase from 17,000 in 2002 (Dolan, 2011). Forcefully moving people into camps made the problems that people had faced prior worse. People were not able to protect their homes, they could not cultivate their crops and their livestock was plundered. It is also commonly known that soldiers would loot the homes of those who had been forced to leave, and food insecurity became a serious problem (Finnström, 2005). People who had been self-sufficient were forced to rely on food aid from the World Food Programme (WFP) and other international bodies, for example, the Red Cross and the Norwegian Refugee Council. However, as Dolan (2003) notes, the food aid assistance given was both erratic and inadequate. Not only did international NGOs become the providers of food, but they also challenged the gender dynamics of traditional practices (an area that I will refer back to later within this chapter). Mulumba and Kindi (2011) note, in camps women

became the de facto heads of the household, even if the male member of the household was present, as food aid was distributed to them. It was also women who would undertake various activities to secure the survival of their families. In essence the male role of the household became redundant. This ultimately altered men's and women's roles and responsibilities, creating an artificial situation within the camps (Meintjes, 2001). Kindi (2010) supports the notion that the traditional role of patriarch was taken away from men through the actions of the various NGOs, and that in numerous cases, men turned to drinking and in some cases abandonment. There are several reasons why the NGO community may have deemed it appropriate to distribute food aid to women rather than to men<sup>262</sup>. Firstly, owing to polygamy, if a man was to be given the food aid, then there may not be enough for all of the wives within the household. Secondly, this method could have been chosen by external international NGOs as a way to challenge gender inequality.<sup>263</sup> Or, on a more practical note, they may have chosen to distribute food in this way as they needed to make sure that children would receive food.

The precise number of people who were killed by the LRA and the UDPA or who died in the camps is unknown (Dolan, 2011). However, there are estimates that as many as 300,000 people lost their lives between 1986 and 2006.<sup>264</sup> With regards to women, many women lost their lives in the camps, not due to a lack of food or due to the presence of the LRA, but to illnesses that were caused by poor sanitation. Jan Egeland, the UN chief Humanitarian Officer at the time, as quoted in *The Guardian* (2004), referred to the situation in Northern Uganda as a "moral outrage...and the biggest neglected humanitarian emergency in the World."

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<sup>262</sup> Whilst I was in the fields, I did try and contact the NGO's who were involved in the process, most specifically WFP. However, I did not receive any reply to the emails that I sent.

<sup>263</sup> International NGOs are at the forefront of challenging gender inequity owing to goal three of the Millennium Development Goals and also due to the various Human Rights declarations that many countries, including Uganda, are signatories to.

<sup>264</sup> In an interview that Kony gave in 2006 from the CAR he claims that he never killed any Acholi civilians, nor did he abduct any children. He insists that those atrocities were committed by the Uganda Government.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/5124762.stm>

Not only did women lose their lives due to preventable illnesses, but it was also women who had to deal with the psychological problems that the war caused to the male member of their families, as socially it is a woman's duty to do so. It is readily accepted that a lot of men whilst in the camps turned to heavy drinking, the results of which were devastating for the family and the household as a whole. Not only this, but domestic violence rates soared, as too did levels of HIV transmission.<sup>265</sup> As coping mechanisms, many women whilst in the camps turned to prostitution so that they could feed their families. Others left their husbands for soldiers.

## **The End**

There is no agreement as to the precise date of the end of the war between the state and the LRA. However, the general consensus is that even though Kony never actually signed a cease fire or peace agreement that the war ended in August 2006 (Kindi, 2010).<sup>266</sup>

Upon the end of the war, people had to make the transition from living in camps to moving back to their homes. This was a difficult time for all returnees, no matter how long one had been displaced for. The conflict in some areas of the region broke down social and cultural traditions, and paralysed economic activity. As Cagney (2010) notes, after the war the only thing that people actually had left, if they were fortunate at all to have anything, was the land that they had cultivated and lived on prior to being forced into IDP camps.

Of those who have returned, there are numerous families who have upon returning to their homes found others living on their lands, be these male or female members of another family. This has been contributed to by several factors, an example of which being that border demarcations have changed during the time that people were living in camps, thus people may have unknowingly encroached on another family's land. Others simply decided to take another's land as their own. As Onegi (2010) notes, land grabbing was

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<sup>265</sup> Northern Uganda has one of the highest rates of HIV transmission in Uganda. The current infection rate is believed to be 8.3 % of the sexually active population of the region.

<sup>266</sup> Two years of talks between the LRA, the Government of Uganda and other international actors in Juba ended with no signing of a Peace accord. The LRA left Uganda and took their campaign of terror into the Congo and the Central African Republic.

endemic, be this by fellow returnees, civil servants, local politicians and or local and national investors.<sup>267</sup> Those who have been affected the most are women and children, as Kindi (2010) notes, due to the role reversal that was witnessed in the camps with women becoming de-facto heads, many men are now punishing women upon their return. Also where women have lost their husbands due to the war, be this either in the camps or at the hands of the LRA, many of them are being denied their traditional and legal land rights, especially widows who are young. It is a struggle that continues.

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<sup>267</sup> In the area where I did my research land grabbing wasn't something that people experienced when they returned home from the camps. Neither did people experience problems with border demarcations.

## **Appendix Two**

### **The Uganda National Land Policy**

#### **4.3 Customary Tenure**

38. The majority of Ugandans hold their land under customary tenure. This is often associated with three problems, (a) it does not provide security of tenure for landowners; (b) it impedes the advancement of land markets; and (c) it discriminates against women. The 1995 Constitution and the Land Act (Cap. 227) attempted to formalise customary tenure and were criticised for destabilizing and undermining its progressive evolution. Despite these attempts, customary tenure continues to be:

- i. Regarded and treated as inferior in practice, to other forms of registered property rights, denying it opportunity for greater and deeper transformation;
- ii. Assessed as lesser regarding dispute resolution and mediation compared to the statutory system;
- iii. Assessed as lesser to other tenures that have titles for proof of ownership in courts of law in the administration of justice;
- iv. Converted to freehold before it attains the totality of the bundle of rights inherent in all other registered tenures that are held in perpetuity;
- v. Disparaged and sabotaged in preference for other forms of registered tenures, denying it the opportunity to progressively evolve.

#### **Policy Statements**

**39. (a) The State shall recognise customary tenure in its own form to be at par (same level) with other tenure systems;**

**(b) The State shall establish a land registry system for the registration of land rights under customary tenure.**

#### **Strategies**

40. To facilitate the evolution and development of customary tenure in relation to social, economic, political and other factors, Government shall take measures to:

- i. Design and implement a land registry of customary tenure to support the registration of land rights under customary tenure;
- ii. Issue certificates of title of customary ownership based on customary land registry that confers rights equivalent to freehold tenure;
- iii. Facilitate conversion of customary land which is already privatised and individualised into freehold tenure;
- iv. Document customary land tenure rules applicable to specific communities at the district or sub- county levels;
- v. Promote systematic demarcation as a measure to reduce the cost of registering rights under customary tenure; and
- vi. Make an inventory of common property resources owned by communities and vest these resources in the communities to be managed under their customary law.

41. To facilitate the design and evolution of a legislative framework for customary tenure, Government shall:

- i. Amend the Land Act (Cap 227) to permit only individually owned customary land to be converted to freehold;
- ii. Amend the registration of Titles Act (Cap 230) to place customary tenure at par (same level) with other tenure systems;
- iii. Modify the rules of transmission of land rights under customary land tenure to guarantee gender equality and equity ;
- iv. Make provision for joint ownership of family land by spouses;
- v. Recognize the role of customary institutions in making rules governing land, resolving disputes and protecting land rights;
- vi. Define family and individual land rights, from communal rights under customary land tenure and distinguish the rights and obligations of customary institutions vis-à-vis those of the community and individuals; and
- vii. Provide for registration of customary land held under trusteeship by traditional institutions or cultural leaders on behalf of communities in the names of trustees.

42. To strengthen traditional land management and administration institutions, Government will take measurements to:

- i. Recognise and enforce decisions of traditional land management institutions by local government and state institutions;
- ii. Ensure full judicial backing for traditional institutions as mechanism of first instance in respect of land rights allocation, land use regulation and land dispute for land under customary tenure;
- iii. Ensure that the decisions of traditional land management institutions uphold constitutional rights and obligations with regard to gender equity;
- iv. Develop guidelines and procedures under customary land law for the allocation and distribution of land complying with the principles of equality and natural justice.



## **Appendix Three**

### **Cik me loyo ki kit me tic ki ngom kwaro I Acholi**

#### **Principles and Practices of Customary Tenure in Acholi lands.**

- A. Customary Land, means land in Acholi land that is not registered under the Registration of Titles Act or officially owned by or vested in the local or central Government.
- B. Communal Land is that over which more than one family have rights and which is managed by elected people chosen by the clan, on behalf of clans. This consists of grazing land, hunting grounds, dancing grounds, market places, playing grounds, forests, ceremonial land and other land of a similar nature.
- C. Household land, is the land allocated to the ladit paco/dogola (family head) to Oddi, (households) for their exclusive use in perpetuity
- D. A Kaka, (clan) is an extended family unit comprising of a generational line including grandfather, fathers, sons, and immediate next of kin
- E. A paco/dogola (family) is a collection of two or more Oddi, (households) who are related and headed by a family head.
- F. A custodian is someone who has responsibility for taking care of or protecting land and land rights.
- G. A won-gang or ladit paco/dogola (head of the family) is the person who has been chosen either by the clan, family or through succession to be the custodian and manager of the family land on behalf of the family members.
- H. An ot (household) is the smallest family unit consisting of a man, wife or wives and their children.
- I. A logwok Dogola/Paco or logwok ot (protector) is a person appointed by the kaka (clan) and ladit paco/dogola (head of the family) to protect the interests of widows and or her children
- J. A person is considered to be married when the marriage celebration has been held
- K. A person is considered to be divorced upon the refund of the dowry.

## **Section 2**

### **Principles of customary Tenure.**

- A. All custoAkotland is vested in the kaka and rights and responsibilities are delegated to the clans, paco/dogola, oddi and individuals
- B. CustoAkotland is not for sale and is to be guarded against loss
- C. All members of the kaka have rights to land
- D. Future generations have rights to land
- E. Land allocated to a paco/dogola or Ot is never taken back and rights exist in perpetuity
- F. Land will always remain in the paco/dogola or ot for emigrant family members (and future unborn) to return to.
- G. Land that is allocated to people who do not have children reverts back to the family/household reserve land for reallocation upon their death.
- H. Handling of land disputes by the clans is not about who is right or wrong but is a win-win situation based on equity (fairness) restoring relationships of the conflicting parties and promoting harmony in the family, clan and community.

## Section 2: Attainment and Loss of Rights to Land

- A. Land rights are derived by memberships of the kaka
- B. Membership to the kaka is achieved by:
  - I. Birth into the kaka (clan) (including potential birth for future generation).
  - II. By marriage into the kaka (clan) by a woman
  - III. By movement into a clan area, with prior approval and with the consent of the kaka (clan), by a non-clan member, who after a period of time living in that area is accepted and considered to be part of the kaka (clan)
- C. Land rights are lost when one leaves the kaka (clan) by:
  - I. Death
  - II. Divorce
- D. Accessing rights are suspended by separation, rights being regained on return.

## Section 3: Universal Rights

- A. Subject to the responsibilities provided in Section, 4 all kaka (clan) members, irrespective of their status, age or gender, have rights to:
  - i. Live on their homestead and family land
  - ii. Farm on their homestead family and farming land
  - iii. To access, all communal land
  - iv. Bury the dead on homestead or family land
  - v. To collect resources such as firewood from communal areas.

- vi. To return to family land after a period of emigration , displacement or divorce
- vii. To reasonably withhold their consent on decisions affecting their rights to land

#### Section 4: Universal Responsibilities

- A. All clan members, irrespective of their status, age or gender, have responsibilities to:
  - i. Develop and use land for positive reasons
  - ii. Preserve and maintain land from degradation
  - iii. Resolve disputes peacefully
- B. All adult clan members, irrespective of their status or gender, have responsibilities to:
  - i. Protect and defend right to land
  - ii. Protect the rights of the vulnerable.

#### Section 5: Rights to Communal Land

- A. All clan members have rights to use and access communally held areas subject to the rules governing their use.
- B. No person or Dogola/Ot (family/household) shall settle on communal land without prior approval of the clan which governs that area.
- C. The clans have the right, at each level, to make, rules in line with general principles and to govern communal land and to appoint managers of that land.

#### Section 6: Rights of vulnerable groups

- A. Girls have the right to live on their homestead/family land as long as they remain unmarried
- B. Orphans have the right to live on their land under kaka (clan) protection until they become a Won-Ot (head of household).
- C. A child born out of marriage has rights to the homestead/family land of the mother's family.
- D. Children/orphans, where the identity of both parents is unknown, have rights to land will be allocated for them by the clans with support of the ker Kawaro and protectors will be appointed.
- E. Widows, whether with or without children, have the choice to stay on the land to which they are married, return to their maiden home and to reject or accept a protector.
- F. The elderly and infirm have rights to land and clan protection.

#### Section 7: Responsibilities of Land Mangers

- A. Management roles under custoAkottenure are:
  - i. Kaka (clan)
  - ii. Dogola (family head)
  - iii. Won-ot (head of household)
- B. Land managers are appointed through consensus (kicimo), together by the kaka (clan) ladit Dogoloa/Paco (head of family) Dogola (family) and or Ot (household) members.
- C. Land managers can be any responsible adult clan member irrespective of their gender
- D. Land managers have the following responsibilities.
  - i. To be custodian and to protect the rights of all paco/dogola or ot (family or household members)
  - ii. To allocate land to heads of households (won-ot) or individuals within their family
  - iii. To ensure that land is used for agreed purposes.
  - iv. To manage the family/household reserve land
  - v. To mark the boundaries of the land in consultation with the kaka (clan) Dogola, (family) Ot (household) and neighbours.
  - vi. To hear and resolve land disputes peacefully
  - vii. To make decisions affecting family land equitably, (fairly) taking account of the interests of all family/household members.
  - viii. Where the needs arises, and where possible, to support members of the wider kaka/dogola, (family/clan)
  - ix. To obtain consent from paco/dogola members when making decisions when affecting their rights to land
  - x. To obtain consent from the family/household members and clan when making major decisions affecting land, (e.g. transfers)

#### Section 8: Responsibility of protectors.

- A. If a widow chooses not to be inherited she becomes the head of the household and a protector will be chosen by the kaka, (clan) and dogola, (family).
- B. The protector's role is solely to protect the rights of the widow and her children. They have no rights over the land of the widow and children
- C. For, non-adult orphans the protector will perform the role of the head of household until such a time that the orphan can take on that role.
- D. Protectors may be removed from the role if they abuse their responsibilities as a protector.

## Appendix Four



## Appendix Five





## Appendix Six



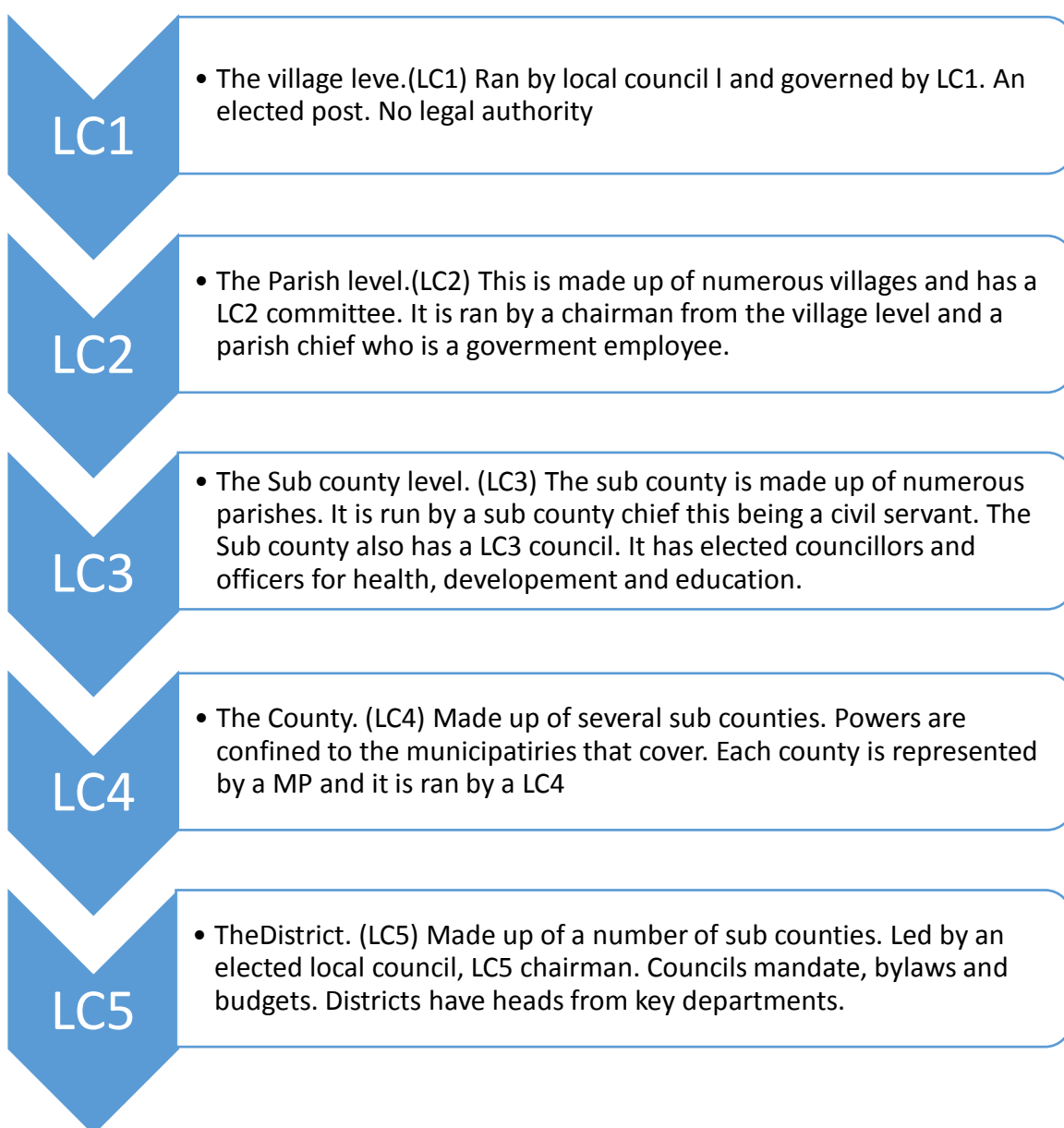
## Appendix Seven

Name of crop	Month for planting	Duration in the garden	Weeding number of times and when	Month of harvest	Nature of crop
Maize	March-May	3 months		July-August	Staple
Beans	April-June	3 months		September-October	Staple
Millet	March-April	3 months		July and August	Both staple and commercial cash crop
Sorghum	April-June	4 months		November-December	Staple
Cassava	April-August	1 year			Staple
Simsim	July	3 months		November-December	Both staple and commercial cash crop
Sweet Potatoes	May-June	3 months			Substitute crop
Rice	April-May	3 months		September-October	Commercial
Groundnut	April-June	3 months		August-October	Both staple and commercial cash crop
Vegetables (Green)	No fixed month	3 weeks		Not specific	Supportive
Cabbage	No fixed month	3 months		Not specific	Substitute
Tomatoes	No fixed month	2 months		Not specific	Substitute
Green gram	May -July	3 months		October	Commercial
Sunflower	April	3 months		July and August	Commercial






## Appendix Eight



## Appendix Nine



OKE CENTRAL  
 ACHER PU PARISH  
 ARUM S/S  
 28/01/2014

REF: CATO PLOT BOT AKECH NIGHY

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① OKECH MOHAMMED

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1 OMYER GU BOSCO

2 OKOT NICHOLAS

3 MARA CHARLES

4 OKWERA GEORGE OTI

5 OLWENY DAVID

6 AKOT ESTRO

7 ANEKA SURDY



## Appendix Ten



